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celebration

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北京青年报
BEIJING YOUTH DAILY

Will China save opera?



The National Center for the Performing Arts has been inviting opera experts to recreate the classics and compose original operas with national artists.

Its efforts, together with those of other Chinese opera houses, are helping to rejuvenate the world opera industry.

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Pepper eaters
burn for Canada

Pepper eaters met to taste the flames at the 7th annual hot pepper eating contest on Canadian National Day.



Page 18 Dancing a tale

Director Xi Shu reinterprets an award-winning screenplay for the stage in *Behind 3.0*.

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heritage
being erased

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target world
with Apps

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enters Web
search market

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95 percent of drugs trafficked by foreigners

By Yao Weijie

In the last three years, 94 of the 98 drug trafficking cases investigated by the Beijing Municipal People's Procuratorate have involved foreigners, the Procuratorate's second branch announced Sunday.

These drug investigations accounted for 67 percent of all smuggling during the same period.

The announcement coincided with the United Nations' International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

Due to jurisdiction arrangements, the Beijing Municipal People's Procuratorate is responsible for all drug trafficking cases in Beijing.

Foreign drug traffickers come from developing countries, especially those in central and southern Africa, the Golden Triangle and the Golden Crescent, the announcement said. Few come from developed countries.

Statistics from the Beijing Second Intermediate People's Court showed that foreign students were the most frequent clients for drug smugglers.

"Bars and other entertainment venues are where trafficking happens. Many students are lonely and far from home – that's why they frequent these places. Drug traffickers know to prey on their weakness and curiosity,"

said Zhang Qihui, a lawyer at the Lan Peng law firm.

Zhang mentioned one case of a foreign student who was doing well in school. The student had the contact information for numerous drug dealers, many of whom he met at the gates of Beijing Language and Culture University and Beijing University.

"He wasn't necessarily a bad kid, just seduced by the dealers," Zhang said.

Most traffickers were found to be female, as women are less scrutinized by customs officials and able to hide more drugs on their bodies, he said.

"Drug trafficking has a bad effect on society. It is often associated with personal injury," Zhang said. He represented one case where two foreign students fought over a bag of drugs in front of a hotel, eventually stabbing each other. One died at the scene.

Rapid economic development has made China an attractive target for foreign traffickers – especially because foreigners are used to expecting a light sentence.

"I think they are learning that weak punishments are a thing of the past, since UK citizen Akmal Shaikh was executed for trafficking in 2008," Zhang said. "The government sent a message that it is determined to severely punish



Foreign students are the most frequent clients of drug dealers.

Photo provided by Information Times

drug traffickers."

China has comparatively strict drug enforcement. Persons carrying some legal medicines from abroad that are not recognized domestically can be prosecuted for trafficking.

The Beijing Public Security Bureau publishes a pamphlet for foreigners cautioning that opium, heroin, methamphetamine, morphine, marijuana, cocaine and other narcotics and psychotropic substances are illegal.

Students ride nude despite police warning

By Yao Weijie

A naked ride planned for June 25 by Guangzhou University students ran afoul of the law in the wee hours of June 24.

Although they were warned to cover up or face five days in jail, some 50 male students chose to bike half-naked around the school for 20 minutes, *Southern Metropolis Daily* reported.

The event was organized by a man nicknamed "Wild Donkey," an 18-year-old bicycle shop worker who was inspired by the World Naked Bike Ride that took place in foreign countries days earlier.

About 50 students pledged to participate the day Wild Donkey posted his plan. The event was intended to promote low-carbon living, participants said.

Campus organizers did not move to stop the event, but asked the participating students to consider riding half-naked instead of baring all.

On June 24, Wild Donkey was picked up by police and held for questioning for four hours. After being released, he told participants he was calling off the event for "personal reasons."

On June 26, the half-naked participants, one of whom wore body paint, began cycling around the school. Police cars attempted to disperse the crowd during the 30-minute stunt.

National law says that persons who expose their bodies in public can be jailed for 5 to 10 days. Large gatherings are also prohibited unless notice of the event has been filed with the police station in advance, said an officer at the Panyu Public Security office who refused to give his name.

"Theoretically, if the number of people present does not exceed 500, then there is no need to notify the police," said Dai Shaogang, a lawyer at Lanpeng Law Firm. "However, naked activities are special because of their social effects. If you organize even a half-naked event, you will likely be expected to file papers," said Dai Shaogang, lawyer of Lanpeng law firm.

"In my opinion, if many people are naked in one place, that is an assembly; if people are naked and running, that is a parade," Dai said.

Securing event approval is a complicated process, and not everyone has the right to organize naked activities, Dai said.

Organizers must submit their name, the goal of the event, the location it will occur at, what will take place, contact information for the location's manager and proof of security. Even if a request is submitted 20 days in advance, there is a good chance it will not be permitted.

Commercial events require additional approval by the Industrial and Commercial Department.

"It's troublesome to complete these procedures. That's why most people give up on organizing naked activities. There are other ways to promote environmental protection," Dai said.

"Acts like this offend people and upset public order. They were obviously seeking attention," said Liu Tangrong, an employee at Guangzhou Guotong, an advertising agency.

Nadamu Fair to open next month in Inner Mongolia



CFP Photo

By Han Manman

Nadamu Fair, an Inner Mongolian pageant, opens next month in Xilin Gol League, the autonomous region's "Capital of Horses." The five-day event, which begins August 6, is a comprehensive celebration of Mongolian sports, culture and art. It will include a trade fair and tourism and sightseeing opportunities.

Liu Junchen, deputy secretary of the Xilin Gol League Committee, said Nadamu Fair has been listed as part of the country's intangible culture heritage. To promote its celebration, Xilin Gol League intends to make this year's celebration an annual occurrence. Liu said the new daily flights from Beijing to Xilinhot on China United Airlines will bring more tourists from around the country and abroad to the fair.

Ecomuseums poor way to preserve nation's minority heritage

By Li Zhixin

After years of preparation, the government's recently passed Intangible Cultural Heritage Law came into effect on June 1. The law was created to provide a foundation for the protection of intangible heritage and raise awareness of its fragility.

However, its protection remains as problematic as ever. Most of China's minority ethnic groups are located throughout the country's west, which remains economically backward and poorly equipped to preserve traditions, said Fang Lili, director of the Art Anthropology Research Center at the China Art Research Institute.

She said that protection of intangible cultural heritage should involve more than cataloging curiosities and putting them on display in an "ecomuseum," but finding people who are willing to inherit the lifestyles, production methods and values of these ethnic groups at a time when mass urbanization is homogenizing the country.



Fang Lili (second from right) and her team visit the village to study its culture and history.

Into Suoga village

Fang Lili first encountered Suoga village, Guizhou Province with her team in 2005. They were there as part of a government research team formed to study how a national program to develop the west was affecting local culture.

The village's 4,000 residents are some of the few Changjiao Miao, a sub-branch of the greater Miao ethnic group. The Changjiao Miao have their own language but no system of writing. Their records are kept on knotted ropes and scored bamboo. For health-care, they rely on a combination of sorcery and ritual.

It took the team six years of observation to learn how this ethnic group passes on its history and culture.

"The secret is in their songs and clothes," she said. "Their history and culture are embedded in lyrics and embroidery."

Young boys are taught to sing songs and young girls learn embroidery. It is in these traditions that their culture is passed down. "It was only through their songs and stitches that we learned their ancestors used to be hunters," she said.

In Changjiao Miao society, the best singer is considered to be the village's most educated man. "On formal occasions, they make their speeches through song," she said. "Learning to sing is the way to establish one's prestige and power."

The graphic patterns its women embroider are special cultural icons of the group, and each has a history. "One has to know the meaning of those patterns to have a deeper understanding of this group's culture," Fang said.

The death of an elder is one of the most important events in the village, and funerals are their biggest festivals, reflecting their strong animistic background.

Paradox of protection

Before the 1960s, the Changjiao Miao had no contact with the outside world due to the language barrier.

Since, their future has become entangled with the outside world as traditions give way to outside influences. Fang said the collapse of their traditional lifestyle has only accelerated since a modern ecomuseum was built beside the village in 1995.

The ecomuseum, China's first, was organized with the aid of Norwegian museum expert John



Many minority groups in the west are having a hard time preserving their traditions.

Photos provided by Fang Lili



Ethnic minorities are often influenced by other cultures when receiving help with protecting their heritage.

Gjestrup. It collected and cataloged information about the local culture and established a data bank for future study.

But with the museum came poverty alleviation funds from the government and foreign foundations, which brought flocks of domestic companies.

While the new infrastructure "improved" the villagers' lives and the inbound tourists gave them a new source of income, the museum has done little to help preserve their culture and traditions.

"Even worse, it changed the villagers' cultural identity and lifestyle. This is a really bad way

to save a minority culture, though it has been quite effective at eliminating poverty," she said.

The team said there were two main causes of the cultural death: young villagers leaving to earn money for their families in the big city and young children receiving public education.

"Becoming a migrant worker is one of the fastest ways to improve their quality of life. Even if they only work for three to six months a year, that income forms the pillar of the household economy," Fang said.

But going to work in the city means entering a new cultural system.

"The people who came from the mountains end up having to learn to understand other cultures in the city. They very quickly find themselves marginalized," she said. "It's just like they are walking in the darkness. All they can do is hope their children will

become well educated and escape their fate."

That is why middle-aged villagers believe that nothing is more important than sending their children to school. "No one wants to learn a culture and traditions that they think are dated and useless. They know if they can't succeed in the city, then they can't succeed in this society," she said.

It's a paradox.

Even if the government and cultural research institutions are eager to save intangible cultural resources, the very people who inherit this intangible cultural heritage don't want them.

"If this isn't resolved, the people are going to lose control of their own culture," she said.

Confidence is key

Fang said that as a researcher she has no right to interfere with the changes affecting the Changjiao Miao and other minority cultures. Researchers only record an ethnic group's culture using written reports and audio and video recordings.

In fact, chances are more likely for a passive cultural restructuring. Rather than actively adjust the relationship between their own culture and an outside culture, the minorities are rejecting their own traditions and completely assimilating into an outside culture because social cues tell them that this is the only way to compete in the world.

There are many parallels between the current cultural shift and China's transformation from an agricultural civilization to an industrial one many decades ago, when China was too eager to copy European cultures.

"But today it is different. A nation's cultural heritage has become a kind of resource. Tradition no longer holds back social development but forms its basis. Alternative cultures give us more ways to combat the problems we face as a world," she said, citing scarce resources, worsening pollution and international conflict.

Whether the minority ethnic groups can see their culture through this transition is a very important test of their confidence, she said.

Fang suggested that finding a way to make minorities profit from their own cultural innovations would be a good way to help the groups see the value in preserving their own cultures and traditions.

App developers aim for success

By Annie Wei

John Zheng is dressed in a white shirt and blue jeans.

He sits in Sanlitun Village Square banging out a message on his iPad: "Obama ain't the only one who wants change."

Like many local developers, Zheng is producing iPad and iPhone applications that are sold to Apple users worldwide via the company's App Store.



SoftBox Pro logo

A new career

Zheng has been an Apple fan since he was five years old. His first encounter with the company came in 1984, when his father spent 9,600 yuan to bring home an Apple II personal computer from Germany.

After shifting between jobs like Web programmer and photographer, Zheng decided to found Eggerr Studio earlier this year to develop original software for the App Store.

Zheng's team is small with one part-time graphic designer and one iOS programmer.

He was stunned when his first product, Softbox Pro, priced 19 yuan or \$2.99, was the top-ranked photography App in the Saudi Arabian, US, French and UK markets.

Softbox Pro turns an iPhone into a light bulb, making it handy when taking a photo of someone under poor lighting.

The application earns the team 3,000 yuan on a peak day.

At the Worldwide Developers Conference in June, Apple announced its App Store had reached a milestone of 500,000 applications with 14 billion downloads.

To date, App Store developers have earned a combined \$2.5 billion.

Fair competition

Online gaming is one of China's most profitable entertainment industries, and many developers are looking to expand their success to the App Store.

PunchBox, the developer of *Fishing Joy*, led game sales in 34 countries. Its game earned it 1 million yuan in the first month following the release. The second month, it brought in 2 million yuan, said PunchBox manager Jia Yuan.

Fishing Joy is a simple, free-to-download game: users have to do their best to catch a big fish. Some users opt to purchase in-game tools to make the task easier or more enjoyable.

"The success of a product in the App Store depends on its quality – luck matters very little," Jia said.

Jia said *Fishing Joy* missed its chance to be the most downloaded game in the US because news of its releases was drowned out by the assassination of Osama bin Laden.

Another game, *Three Kingdoms' Tower Defense: Legend of Shu*, draws on the popular Chinese story to create a familiar game world. In many Asian countries, the game ranks in the Top 3



John Zheng, founder of Eggerr Studio, shows off his iPad application at Sanlitun Village.

Photos provided by Zheng Zheng



App developers face stiff competition if they want to succeed in the mobile market.

CFP Photo

among App sales.

Its developer Tang Zhongning, founder of Beijing Astep Game, said it earned 200,000 yuan during its peak month of sales.

Tang had 15 years of game development experience before he decided to found Astep in 2010.

"It's a lot different than the traditional gaming industry. In the App Store, a game's path to the end user is more transparent. Developers focus on game quality instead of how to get it into more regions and Internet cafes," Tang said.

Competition and piracy

But for all its fairness, it's hard to ignore how rampant both competition and piracy are in the App Store.

Tang and Jia said that as more companies look to it as a good source of funding, success is becoming difficult for the small teams.

While there are still opportunities, small developers face a tough battle if they hope to succeed online. "Their chances [of success] are sliding fast because there are already 500,000 appli-

cations, and more new ones every day," Jia said.

The intense competition also makes it difficult for small developers to guarantee the quality of both their product and its marketing. "Users are getting pickier about looking for quality games," Tang said.

PunchBox has grown to 60 people and is preparing to release two or three new games in September. Astep's team is up to 40 people, 10 of whom were around when it released *Three Kingdoms' Tower Defense*.

Much like in the days of offline PC development, piracy is the primary issue facing developers. Given the number of jail-broken iPads and iPhones on the market, many developers estimate that legal purchases make up only a tenth of their user base.

Intellectual property theft is another nightmare for developers. In the Chinese App Store, the majority of books are pirate versions that have not been licensed for App Store sale.

"Our strategy has been to make the games free but charge users for access to content within the game," Tang said.

The other option is aggressive updates – adding features faster than the pirates can copy them.

Keep moving on

For Eggerr Studio, a team of 3, the competition is even harder.

Zheng's current focus is simple, original applications built to tackle familiar problems.

According to SoftBox Pro's sales data, most buyers are located in North America or Europe, where people may be more willing to pay \$2.99 for software.

Zheng used the product to conduct some market tests. When SoftBox Pro was free with a time limit, downloads were about the same in China and North America. When he added a price tag, most downloads came from the US.

Given the intense competition and piracy in China, Zheng is planning to target the North American market. Among Chinese developers, his company has an advantage in this area – Zheng grew up in North America as a teenager.

He is planning to start a company instead of a studio, and to recruit more people who are able to produce new products.

But iOS programmers don't come cheap – a programmer with one or two years of experience can demand a starting salary of 10,000 yuan per month.

"Even so, the cost is much lower than running a similar company in the US," Zheng said.

Engine of growth Beijing-Shanghai high-speed to boost local economy

There are supporters and opponents, as well as countless questions about safety, profitability, speed, threat to airlines and corruption surrounding the launch of the new Shanghai-Beijing high-speed train.

But only a personal experience sitting in the train's red leather seats may give someone real perspective on the country's biggest rail project.

High-speed trains linking the country's two major cities of Beijing and Shanghai made their commercial debut Thursday amid controversies over safety, speed and profitability.

The 220-billion-yuan rail line, operating on a trial basis since May, is opening a year ahead of schedule and expects to carry 80 million passengers a year, AFP reported.

What's the feeling sitting on a bullet train whistling past fields, rivers, mountains, tunnels and buildings? Ask the critical journalists who were invited to try the trains Monday.

They had nothing but good things to say about the experience, a local media outlet reported. For hundreds of journalists, the Monday's ride was their first time to experience the so-called on-land flight.

"The train is silent and comfortable. I was trying to write some notes, it's very steady and I didn't feel queasy while writing on a moving train," said Ito Chitose, director of Japanese Hokkaido News in Beijing.

The press veteran believes the building of the high-speed railway network surely is good news for the local economy, especially freight business and tourism for cities along the line.

"Does the US have a high-speed rail yet?" one conductor asked an American journalist as the train neared Shanghai.

Not really, the journalist replied. "Oh, is that so?" she replied, a smile wide across her face. (Agencies)



High-speed trains linking Beijing and Shanghai made their commercial debut yesterday. CFP Photo

The third eye

A personal ride answers all

Since the test run, the new line has come under questioning due to the high ticket prices, safety standards and the Railway Ministry's growing debt.

But all that's pushed aside as journalists got on the train to try it for themselves. Below is an excerpt from one Shanghai journalist Zha Minjie after being invited to attend the train's test run:

I boarded the train at Shanghai Hongqiao Railway

Station on June 16, in one of its many preview runs before today's official opening.

The seats in the carriages were occupied by technicians, rail officials, as well as reporters and camera men.

The seats were cushioned, spacious and comfortable.

Speed, of course, is the mesmerizing factor of bullet-train travel. Our train reached up to 300 kilometers an hour before slowing to between 280

and 290 kilometers per hour. Camera clicks greeted the digital speed numbers that flashed on a board in each carriage.

Along with modern new services, the railways have tried to quell the traditional image of crowded carriages, chaotic masses of people, smelly interiors and surly attendants.

Train attendants, who were chosen in an application process that only allowed one in 10 candidates through,

underwent six months of training. One of the things they learned was to smile warmly.

The trip from my front door in Shanghai to the downtown rail station in Beijing took nearly six hours.

I would take the train in the future, as the shorter traveling time is an advantage and I would not have to worry about delays, which happen frequently on flights.

(By Huang Daohen)

宽视野 宽生活
尚色SUNSHINE 时尚双周刊
 隆重推出
 INTRODUCE WITH HONOR

时尚双周刊
 隆重推出
 INTRODUCE WITH HONOR

尚色SUNSHINE
 时尚双周刊
 隆重推出
 INTRODUCE WITH HONOR

COVER STORY
赵子琪
 为自己活 淋漓尽致

Holiday Soul
 我的度假骚灵
 Swimsuit Trend
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16 轻薄透, 数量日扮大PK

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Web war never ends

People's Daily grabs for share of the search market

By Huang Daohen

It seemed the battle was over: Google abandoned China and Baidu reigned supreme at the top of the Chinese Web search market.

But on the Web, the battle is never over.

Baidu has managed to defend itself from competing search engines like NetEase's Youdao, Sohu's Sogou and Microsoft's Bing China – but will it survive Jike?



Led by former ping-pong superstar Deng Yaping, Jike is planning to take on Baidu.

Wu Jun/CFP Photo

New challenger

Many established brands have admirers, and Baidu is without question an established brand.

Each September, hundreds of members of the Baidu Fan Club descend on downtown Beijing for the annual Baidu conference. Most are college students eager to get a bit closer to Baidu founder Li Yanhong.

Only a decade ago, Li and his colleagues were passing out advertisements on the streets of Zhongguancun and being totally ignored. Today, it is one of China's largest Internet companies.

"[Baidu] appeared at the right time and place in the history of China's Internet development and seized an opportunity," said Thomas Lee, a former engineer at Google China.

But in spite of its dominance, Lee says Baidu is not an unstoppable juggernaut.

That's why the 29-year-old search engineer joined Goso.cn last year, a new search engine launched by the People's Daily Group.

Last week, the People's Daily announced the re-launch of that search engine under the new name Jike. Many see it as a sign that the tightly-controlled state media group is preparing to battle Baidu for control of China's Web searches.

Traditionally, search firms like Baidu tend to be headed by people with IT experience: Jike is headed by Deng Yaping, a 38-year-old retired ping pong star whose accolades include 18 international championship titles and a stint as deputy secretary of the Communist Youth League's Beijing Municipal Committee.

Given her non-technical



This screenshot shows the homepage of the new Jike search engine.

“It's indeed a very competitive industry since there are already lots of bigger companies. But we cannot do nothing just because someone is already doing it.”

background, the company's heavy lifting may fall to Liu Jun, former chief of research at Google China.

The site shares a similar interface with Google and Baidu, with a tangram-inspired logo in blue, yellow and black. The name Jike, intended as a word play on the English “geek,” has the Chinese meaning of “immediate.”

It's indeed a very competitive industry since there are already lots of bigger companies, Deng said at a recent press conference. “But we cannot do nothing just because someone is already doing it.”

Jike is a vertical search engine product that integrates news, news forums, pictures, blogs, videos and microblogs. “Users only need to enter key words and they will have a fresh news experience as Jike provides them with all-around information related to

the topic,” Deng said.

Lee said he has been impressed by Liu's work, and that much of Jike's core search technology has been created from scratch.

The company, currently based in the World Financial Center, has 100 employees.

War for the Web

However, Dennis Zhao, senior analyst at Analysys International, is hesitant to call the brewing battle a “war.”

A report by Analysys International indicates that China's search market is expected to be worth \$4.9 billion (31.7 billion yuan) by 2015.

Before Google's withdrawal from the Chinese mainland, Google and Baidu competed fiercely for control of the market. Today, Baidu controls 90 percent

of the search market.

Smaller competitors like Bing, Youdao, Sogou and Tencent's SoSo held less than 1 percent of the search market each prior to Google's departure.

Though Jike may not yet pose a real threat to Baidu, major Internet companies came out in force last Monday for the official launch of the company's website.

Local Internet gurus, including Sina CEO Charles Chao, Sohu's Sogou CEO Wang Xiaochuan and Baidu's chief scientist William Zhang, were all on hand to help with the launch.

“With the backing of a national media organization, the new site has virtually unlimited resources,” Sohu's Zhang said, adding that Deng is a highly capable woman.

The Chinese Academy of Sciences promised to provide technological support for the new search engine, and formed a joint laboratory with Jike last year.

Deng said in an interview with Xinhua that Baidu is a formidable rival, especially with Google out of the mainland market.

“Baidu is so popular, and it is difficult to change people's Web habits,” Deng said. She said Jike would develop its own style to

attract users.

Lee, who is responsible for Jike's mobile service, said plans to expand the service to more phones are in the works. Lee said his team is still recruiting developers.

Jike is not the only state-run search engine: earlier this year, Xinhua News Agency and China Mobile teamed up to start Panguso.com, a joint venture.

Monopoly hurts

Many netizens have been pleased with the new developments. According to a poll by Tencent, more than 90 percent of netizens responded that the country's Internet industry has been damaged by monopolies.

The memory of last year's battle between Qihoo 360 and Tencent remains fresh for many users.

Analysys International's Zhao said monopolies have been hampering Web development. Baidu, Tencent and Alibaba dominate the search engine, instant messaging and e-business realms.

As of the end of last year, Baidu claimed 90 percent of the search market while Tencent took almost 77 percent of the instant messaging field. In e-business, as many as 54 percent of all buyer-to-buyer sales are conducted using Alibaba's platform.

Zhao said these monopolies inevitably lead to stagnation.

He encouraged the government to tighten its legislation and supervision of big companies and to encourage promising new enterprises to enter the market.

Only when the giants are restricted by natural market forces will the Internet industry experience sound development, Zhao said.

Bicycles, environment and the budget



Once a kingdom of bicycles, can the country return to cycling?
CFP Photo

By Zhao Hongyi

The energy-saving office of public agencies under the Shandong Provincial government purchased 100 bicycles and distributed them to its 24 subordinates for official use. The office requested its employees use bikes for public services within three kilometers and prohibited the use of automobiles.

"We are trying to reduce waste and raise efficiency under the call from the central government," Dong Yibin, deputy director of the office, told Xinhua News Agency.

The office is not alone in doing so. Many local government bodies, including those in Chengdu, Zhengzhou and Shenzhen, have purchased bicycles and request their employees to ride them instead of using cars.

The Shandong government purchased 320 bicycles for use in its 22 subordinated agencies in mid-May. Officials at the district government said they will purchase more if the program is successful.

These purchases are the result of the central govern-

ment's insistence on limiting the use of automobiles by government agencies.

The number of vehicles for official use in the country has exceeded 2 million, with the annual cost and maintenance of these vehicles surpassing 200 billion yuan, according to the latest working report of the central government released earlier this year.

But the figures are conservative, as the central government can hardly obtain a clear picture of the numbers from local provinces, counties, district and village governments. The actual figures are estimated to be upwards of 8 million vehicles and 500 billion yuan each year.

Beijing has about 700,000 automobiles for official use alone. The city is much more strict and conservative in purchasing, maintaining and using official automobiles.

At the annual National People's Congress session held in March, officials and deputies admitted that it's difficult to collect accurate figures concerning vehicle usage throughout the country.

Comment

A good try!

I fully agree and support the effort, which can solve so many problems. The use of bicycles reminds us to choose green ways of travel and reduce unnecessary budget items. It's critical that we maintain the momentum from this campaign.

— He Yong, director, Liaoning Branch, Xinhua News Agency

It's only a show

The office requests its officials ride bikes for public business within three kilometers. I'm sure that it will be another game of numbers. The core points here are to reduce bureaucracy, raise government efficiency and realize the concept of low-carbon emission, environmental protection and energy saving.

— Chen Guoqin, professor, Shanghai University

Who will ride the bicycles?

I'm sure it'll be the junior members of the government bodies who will have to ride the bikes. Who can assure me that all government officials will

ride the bicycles? The "reform" will eventually become a show and evoke more anger. We need thorough political reform to give make sure officials actually do work, increase the watchdog function of the National People's Congress and reduce the huge number of government bodies.

— Feng Limin, news commentator

Clean politics is necessary

Please look at what happened to former Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich when he sold government positions and engaged in corruption. We need transparency in our government bodies and serious supervision of the National People's Congress from the media. We have arrived at the critical point of time for these reforms. We can call them "structural reform" if we are disinclined to call them political reforms. It's critical for the long-term, sustainable development of our country.

— Wang Jun, professor of social science, Peking University

Should Chinese milk standards depend on national conditions?

By Yao Weijie

"The China dairy industry's new standards are the lowest in the world," said Wang Dingmian, president of Guangzhou Dairy Industry Association at the Southern Pasteurized Milk Development Forum on June 20, reviving a debate about the dairy industry's domestic standards.

The protein content of 100 grams of raw milk should be 2.8 grams according to the new standard, down from 2.95 grams and far below the 3.0 grams in most developed countries. The maximum number of bacteria must not exceed 2 million per milliliter, a standard that is 20 times higher than the US and EU's.

This standard has been criticized as "the worst in the world" by some experts.

"The standard will directly affect consumers' rights and interests. Although the protein content is only 1.5 percent less than before, the nutritional content is far less and cannot meet the demand of the consumer," said Wang. "The more bacteria in milk, the higher chance it has of harming someone's health."

Others think the standard should depend on national conditions.

"The Chinese dairy industry is only 10 years old, while the history of the dairy industry in foreign countries is more than 100 years old," said Jin Hai, executive director of the Inner Mongolia Dairy Industry Association. "Now every Chinese person can drink milk. Why don't you check out the standards of the US in the 1970s and '80s?"

"If we use the standards that the US uses today, dairy farmers would go bankrupt and people would never drink milk."



Experts say new standards for the country's dairy industry are the lowest in the world.

Sheng Jingwei/CFP Photo

Comment

Never drink Chinese milk

It's terrible. I won't drink Chinese milk anymore. My Chinese friends tell me that I should drink soy milk. I don't like the taste of soy milk, so I may have to buy imported milk, even if it's very expensive and troublesome.

— Cedars Katina, foreign student

Explain clearly to the public

China has just started in the dairy industry, and it's necessary to lower standards to protect this industry. I can accept the new standard, but the government should explain to the public why and

how they made this standard to secure public understanding. If they revise the standard based on a broad investigation, scientific research and experimental results, and can ensure they are protecting people's health, I think many people will understand.

In addition, I hope the government has follow-up policies, like limiting additives, helping dairy farmers improve milk quality and making step-by-step plans to enhance the standard to an international level in the future. We shouldn't just be content with the status quo.

— Duan Wei, journalist

Do not sacrifice the health of the public

The bacteria standard was raised from 500,000 to 2 million? The change is too big! No matter what the conditions are, the government shouldn't drop the standard so much. It is sacrificing the health of the public to adapt to dairy farmers' needs. Even though every 100 grams contains 2.8 grams of protein, enterprises that can't achieve this standard will still find ways to get around it.

The government can't eliminate the hazards of bad milk by lowering the standard. It needs to find an alter-

native, such as allowing some feed mills to buy bad milk at a lower price.

— Yang Fan, designer

High-priced dairy products might be safer

I find the prices of milk at supermarkets are not all the same. Some milk brands might divide raw materials into different classes, thus producing different kinds of dairy products. I will drink domestic milk sparingly. If necessary, I will choose high-priced domestic dairy products only.

— He Changsheng, playwright

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Diplomats' ping-pong tournament held in Beijing

By Chu Meng

More than 120 diplomats from 60 countries along with their families and officials from China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs gathered inside the Beijing Gymnasium last Saturday for the fourth Friendship Diplomats' Table Tennis Tournament.

The tournament was created by the Maldives embassy in Beijing and the China Table Tennis Association.

"Ping-pong in China is like basketball in the US," said Ahmed Latheef, the Maldives ambassador to China, at the opening ceremony. "Besides, the sport is easily accessible for people around the world."

"A ping-pong competition is a tool for us to understand the culture and people while developing our diplomatic work here in the country."

Latheef is an avid sportsman who has represented his country in ping-pong on a number of occasions. He also holds the distinction of being the first Maldivian to win an international tennis competition when he won the All Nepal Veterans Tennis tournament in Kathmandu in 1996.

After retiring from professional sports, Latheef took up the responsibility of managing the Table Tennis Association of Maldives in addition to his diplo-



Participants from Poland

matic responsibilities. He was the association's president from 1999 until 2004.

At the ceremony, he presented an Outstanding Contribution Award to Malaysia Ambassador Lim Juay Jin and Serbia Ambassador Nenad Glisic for their continual efforts in supporting the event over the last three years.

Event organizers were also delighted to have former world champion Qi Baoxiang as the guest of honor. She played an exhibition with Latheef before the formal contest.

Vietnam competed against Italy. France went up against Kyrgyzstan. The US faced Pakistan.

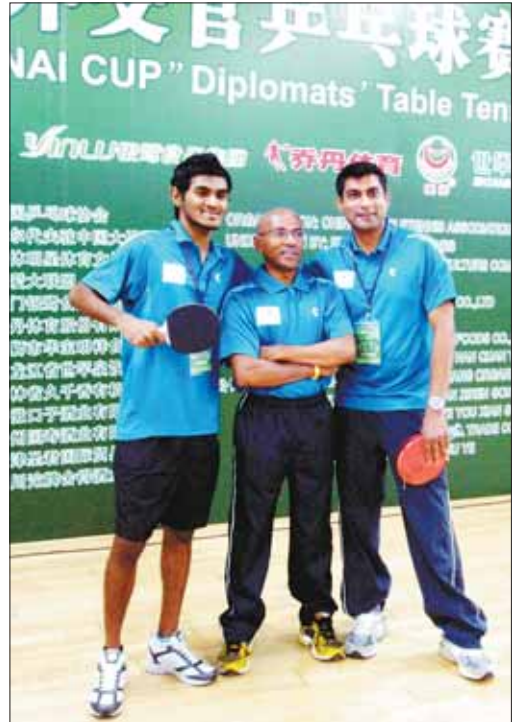
"This is my first participation," said Zaididah Rahman, an officer from the Malaysian embassy.

"And I only learned to play ping-pong four months ago in Beijing. I'm not eying medals."

Others came to win. "I have been practicing here in Beijing for years," said Maciej Gaca from Poland, who has played ping-pong for 10 years. When he wasn't playing, he walked around watching other games.

Russia eventually won the team event, with Mikheev Alexey from the Russian embassy also winning the men's singles. In women's singles, Paneta Lilo-maiava from Samoa triumphed.

The event also included an exhibition between a team from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a team of diplomats. The diplomats won 3 games to 1.



Ambassador Ahmed Latheef of the Maldives (middle)

Photos by Chu Meng

Italy wants piece of China's booming tourism economy

By Chu Meng

A list of comprehensive stimulus plans under the "Travel Italy" project was launched by ambassador Attilio Massimo Iannucci at the Italian embassy in Beijing last Monday, aiming to attract some of China's outbound tourism by opening non-stop flights and developing Chinese-oriented sightseeing destinations.

"It's good news for Chinese tourists, who now have more choices," the ambassador said.

"At the same time, it is also good news for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy and its Ministry of Economic and Tourism Development, for they finally decided to change from conservative to positive policymakers."

Iannucci said the belated plan is tailor-made for China's booming tourism industry.

First, three non-stop flights between China and Italy opened on June 15. Italian Alitalia Airline signed code-sharing agreements with China Eastern Airlines, for the first time jointly operating non-stop flights from Beijing to Rome and from Shanghai to Rome. There will be four flights per week.

With Air China, a non-stop



Alitalia Airline announced the opening of non-stop flights between Beijing and Rome and Between Beijing and Milan at the Italian embassy in Beijing.

Photos provided by Luo Rui

flight from Beijing to Milan will operate three times a week.

Marco Sansavini, Italian Alitalia Airline's executive vice president of sales and distribution, said the number of flights per week will also increase this autumn.

"Limited transportation services is a fundamental barrier to attracting Chinese tourists," Sansavini said. "From now on,

passengers from China to Rome by the Italian aviation network can easily access to 28 destinations in Italy."

Meanwhile, a one-month roundtable talk, aiming to create new tourism routes and destinations in Italy exclusively to meet the needs of Chinese tourists, was launched with the support of tourism departments in Marche,

Puglia, Veneto and Toscan and officials from Beijing, Guangdong and Jiangsu provinces, as well as professionals from 15 Chinese tourism companies in Beijing.

"In 2010, the Italian embassy in Beijing issued a total of 8,164 individual tourism visas, a 70 percent increase compared with the number in 2009. And Rome has been listed 15th among the most

visited overseas destinations by Chinese tourists on Ctrip in the fourth quarter of 2010, and the second favorite European destination," Iannucci said.

He said Italy has been lagging behind other European countries such as France, Greece and Spain in attracting Chinese tourists.

"We have to change that," said Luisa Bergonzoni, the Beijing representative in the China Travel project. She said that Chinese tourists' purchasing strength of luxury brands is constantly surpassing expectations of French manufacturers. But half the world's top luxury brands are in Italy, such as Hermes, Dolce & Gabbana, Salvatore Ferragamo, Prada, Gucci and Versace.

"Italian handicraftsmen have maintained traditional skills and fostered many famous luxury brands because of their conservatism," she said. "Also because of that, Italians are reluctant to face transformations happening in the world."

The Palazzo Strozzi Museum in Florence will issue Chinese-language brochures and offer Chinese-speaking tour guides starting today. A Chinese tourism App for iPhone users is available for free.

Wokai able to accept RMB donations

By Xinji Letu

Wokai, the pioneering US-based non-profit organization that provides microloans to poor Chinese, finally found a Chinese partner that will enable it to accept domestic donations.

Last Thursday, China Population Welfare Foundation (CPWF) and Wokai jointly declared the launch of "Wokai Fund," through which contributors in China can donate to the organization.

"We spent more than a year and a half looking for the right partner. The hardest part was finding an organization that was the right fit for us to launch here in China," said Casey Wilson, co-founder and CEO of Wokai.

Due to tight regulations on finance, Wokai could not accept donations within China in the past four years. All contributors donated money from abroad or in Hong Kong through their international accounts.

With growing demand for donations within China, Wokai started looking for a Chinese partner that would help it fundraise in the country.

CPWF is a renowned Chinese charity NGO with a long track record. "They themselves have done microfinance in the past and we share a common goal in our commitment to growing the microfinance sector in China," Wilson said.

CPWF launched a microfinance-like program in 1995 called Program of Happiness and



Casey Wilson, co-founder and CEO of Wokai (middle), at an event to launch Wokai Fund

Photo by Jiang Jun

Action to Help Impoverished Mothers, which provides small loans to poor mothers in rural areas.

"We want to explore a new model to develop microfinance through cooperation with Wokai," said Shi Sen, official of CPWF. "They have great expertise in financial operation and supervision, which is what we should learn from them."

Wilson said CPWF has an extensive network throughout China's western and central regions in which Wokai can focus, and it has an "intelligent, hard-working team" that fits well with Wokai's culture.

Started in 2007, Wokai has grown fast. To date, the organiza-

tion has raised 2.15 million yuan and distributed 1,107 microfinance loans, helping 749 borrowers in Sichuan and Inner Mongolia start a business, and escape poverty.

Wilson said the key to such success lies in the unyielding commitment of her team and the great efforts from their partner NGO in Inner Mongolia and Sichuan.

"They are working hands-on with Wokai borrowers, distributing loans, collecting repayments, posting profiles and updates, which is key to Wokai's 99.5 percent repayment rate and general operations," Wilson said.

Michael Lim, a Singaporean businessman living in Beijing who has donated more than

12,000 yuan through Wokai, said what attracts him the most is the organization's transparency. "I can see where my donation goes and also I can get feedback from the recipients, which is very important to me," he said.

To further expand its network of microfinance operations, Wokai is on the lookout for strong field partners in China's central and western regions. In addition, it is actively recruiting Chinese staff members.

"Our next plan is to scale in China. We know that there is potential interest in our work. Now we need to effectively build our marketing and fundraising efforts to achieve our potential," Wilson said.

Hot pepper eating contest highlights Canada Day celebrations

By Wei Xi

Last Saturday afternoon, the English-language magazine and website *the Beijinger* organized its 7th annual hot pepper eating contest as part of Canadian National Day celebrations at the Canadian International School.

Nine contestants from China, the US, Mexico and South Korea participated, each eating as many spicy peppers as they could within five minutes.

Each contestant was provided with 100 peppers, a bottle of water and a bottle of yogurt.

Contestants could drink water during the contest, but drinking the yogurt was equivalent to raising the white flag.

American Gabriel Monroe, the defending champion, won again by consuming 60 chili peppers.

This was Monroe's fourth win in this contest. He has never lost.

He came up a bit short of his personal best though: 85 peppers consumed, in 2006.

"I hoped to break the record this time, but I was eating too slowly," he said after this year's competition.

Monroe said his mother used to grow Caribbean red habaneros, a very spicy type of pepper, in their South Carolina garden, and they always used it to cook meals.

Xu Yang, a contestant from Beijing, participated in the contest for the first time.



Contestants eating hot peppers at the Canadian International School last Saturday Photo by Wei Xi

"I ate 26 peppers today," Xu said. "They were not that spicy when in the mouth, but became really hot in your stomach."

Xu said the contest was very exciting. Although he normally likes spicy foods, eating peppers straight up was a challenge.

The celebration featured other activities, like "Canadian Idol," band performances and dances, but the five-minute hot-pepper-eating contest was the highlight of the day.

James Aldridge, vice chair of the board of directors of the Canada China Business Council, said they have held Canada Day celebrations for many years and that the pepper-eating contest is always a major event.

"There are a lot of watermelon-eating contests or hot-dog-eating contests, but they are all old-fashioned, and everyone can eat a watermelon or a hot dog," said Michael Wester, general manager of True Run

Media, which owns the *Beijinger*. "A hot-pepper-eating contest is different. It's a challenge for every contestant."

After the contest, every participant received a certificate, on which their personal record was written.

The top six finishers were rewarded with vouchers for spicy food at different restaurants, and Monroe, for winning, got 2,500 yuan's worth of spicy food.

Event

Apple store's college night

All college students are invited to present creative works produced on their Macs, including music, movies, podcasts and slideshows. You can plan your own College Night, like band performances, at the store whenever you like. For detailed information, visit apple.com.cn/retail/collegenights.

Where: Apple Store, Building 6, Sanlitun Village, 19 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 7-7:30 pm, Tuesday every week

Email:

collegenight_cn@apple.com

Cost: Free (reservation required)

Knitting classes for all levels

Every Wednesday, Beyond Knitting offers classes for beginners and advanced knitters. You will learn techniques such as casting on, knit stitch, purl stitch and casting off, and also history of knitting and grades of yarns.

Where: Changes but mostly Sanlitun, Chaoyang Park, Lido area and CB, contact the organizer for location each week

When: 10 am - noon, every Wednesday

Email:

contact@beyondknitting.com

Cost: 200 yuan (including materials)

Hutong tour

Beijing's hutong are always full of mysterious stories, legends and deep culture. Explore hidden histories of Old Beijing and experience the daily life of Beijingers. By walking into the hutong, you not only see the evolution of the city, but also get to listen in on local conversations and try traditional snacks.

Where: 1 Jindaoan Hutong, Beixinqiao, Dongcheng District (Exit C of the Beixinqiao subway stop on Line 5)

When: 10 am - noon, Saturday every three weeks

Email:

info@thehutong.com

Cost: 120 yuan per person (including snacks and teas)

Children's special class:

ABC Music & Me

ABC Music & Me is designed for early childhood language and literacy development through bundled and thematic lessons on songs, rhymes, stories and activities. The program will also improve children's loco-motor, fine-motor and gross-motor skills and cultivate their sharing, self-regulation and self-control abilities.

Where: COCO MOMA apartments, Room 2302, Building 9, 1 Xiangheyuan Lu, Dongzhimen Wai,

When: 10-10:45 am, Sunday every week

Tel: 13621354114

Cost: 480 yuan for a moth (4 classes), additional 150 yuan for materials

(By Wei Xi)

Dial 114 to make doctor appointments in public hospitals

By Yao Weijie

Starting today, a unified registration system for patients wanting to make hospital visits will be implemented. Those who dial 114 can make appointments at 30 different hospitals in Beijing, 21 of which are third-tier hospitals.

By the end of the year, more hospitals will offer this service. Patients can make appointments three months in advance.

"In my first years in Beijing, when I got sick, I had to get up at 4 or 5 am to go register at the hospital, and even then, sometimes I couldn't get a number," said Zhang Liping, an employee

at Jia Run accounting firm. "I had to resort to [hiring people to wait in line for me]."

Several hospitals allow patients to call ahead of time to make appointments, but until now, there hasn't been a uniform number that people can call.

"It is a waste of time for us to check different numbers on the Internet and find out which is the right number," Zhang said.

Patients can now dial 114 to register any time. The platform doesn't charge a service fee.

Beijing Unicom will nearly double its operator capacity, adding 900 telephone operators just for the registration ser-

vice. They will be trained by the health bureau.

Three retired public health workers will also be on hand to assign degrees of urgency to the calls.

The website bjguahao.gov.cn, operated by Beijing Unicom, will also take appointments. It can register up to 70,000 people per day.

"In the future, the telephone and Internet registration service will be the main methods for setting appointments for doctor visits," said Liu Zhiyu, an employee at Tencent. "People should get used to it instead of queuing up early in the morning."

How to make an appointment

1. Dial 114.
2. The operator will ask you which hospital and which department you want and input your information. If the appointment time you want is available, you be notified.
3. If successful, you will receive a text message notifying you of the time and an eight-digit security code. You could go to hospital reception directly at the appointed time.
4. If you want to cancel the registration, dial 114 at least a day prior. If you break an appointment three times, you will lose the ability to make appointments over the phone.

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyong@ynet.com

Where can I buy a decent charcoal barbecue grill? I've tried Carrefour and B&Q, but the grills there seem to be low quality.

Go to the flower market at Nüren Jie (Women's Street). There are several large charcoal grills, with the most expensive ones costing about 1,000 yuan. You can also find some smaller models at shops along the street. Also, Ikea and Villa Lifestyles sell barbecue grills, though some are quite expensive. Visit villalifestyles.cn for more information.

I haven't lived in Beijing for years and just got back days ago. The city's changed so much that I'm a stranger now. Can anyone give me some suggestions for cool bars and clubs?

Every one has his or her own standard of what's good or bad, so we're not sure what clubs or bars you might like.

If you like to drink beers, go to The Tree, Stumble Inn or Beer Mania, which have good beer selections.

If you are looking for some hutong bars, then head to Mao Mao Chong, Salud or El Nido.

Is it legal to sleep on the Great Wall? My plan is to go to Jinshanling like and camp on the wall with sleeping bags.

Unfortunately, it is illegal, though many people camp there. One thing you need to keep in mind is that the weather gets a little chilly at night, even during summertime. Bring enough clothing if you've made up your mind about spending a night there, but it is better not to.

(By Wei Xi)

Beijing launches inaugural low-altitude helicopter tour

The Capital Aviation Helicopter Company, which operates sightseeing tours and a charter service, will launch a helicopter tour from Badaling Airport on Monday.

Residents who pay the group price of 1,500 yuan per person can experience sightseeing as never before: from the air. The tour will fly over the Great Wall at Badaling, among other places.

Each passenger will be provided insurance equivalent to 1 million yuan. A service will open for individual customers before the end of the year, at a price expected to be higher than 1,500 yuan.

The route is 40 kilometers and will take 15 minutes. The helicopter will fly over Badaling Great Wall, Yeyahu Wetland Park, the Kangxi grasslands, Guanting reservoir and Woniushan scenic spot.

The helicopter has two drivers' seats and four passengers' seats. Passengers will wear headphones, as it'll be very noisy inside.

The company plans schedules depending on the number of visitors.

Where: Badaling Airport, Yingchengzi Hangkong Yihao Lu, Yanqing County
When: Please book three days in advance

Tel: 5915 6756
Cost: 1,500 yuan

(By Yao Weijie)



Badaling Airport will offer 15-minute helicopter sightseeing tours.

Photo provided by Beijing Youth Daily

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Road to revival

World artists fight to save opera

By He Jianwei

It has been a rough decade for classic arts. Countries around the world are slashing their budgets and few people are willing to spend for a night at the opera. But theaters everywhere seem determined to drag old arts into the new millennium by rediscovering ancient stories and creating new works. Their efforts have not only helped to lower the cost of productions – in some cases, they have been able to guarantee high attendance and revitalize this 400-year-old art form.

Opera is a luxury good. Each production begins with an enormous cost. It is used to design the stage and costumes and hire the finest orchestra, director and actors.

But that crippling cost makes it difficult to put on an opera. The National Center for the Performing Arts (NCPA) alone invests between 6 million and 8 million yuan in each production. At the initiation of the NCPA, more than 26 representatives of 13 theaters in eight countries attended the "2011 NCPA World Theater Forum" to discuss management and development in modern opera.

Collaboration

The NCPA and Guangzhou Opera House presented a joint production of *Tosca* in early May.

The new production was directed by Italian director Giancarlo del Monaco, who previously worked five times to adapt this story about love and hate, politics and conspiracy. The collaboration ushered in a new era of opera's development. China broke ground on many new opera theaters during the last decade. These new theaters are planned to rent stage space to leading international companies to help their own repertoires.

"Our approach to creating new production is in three steps: inviting national troupes to recreate classical operas, creating original Chinese operas with national artists and troupes, and presenting new versions of classic operas," said Deng Yujing, deputy director of the NCPA. "By collaborating with international artists we can present more than 10 top-quality operas every year."

High quality guarantees high attendance. NCPA manages to recover the huge cost of production through box office sales. *Turandot* broke even on its seventh night during the first round of performances. The original opera *Xishi* was in the black by its second round of performances.

The NCPA says its viewers are mostly people in their 20s who have grown up with modern culture and tend to go to tend to prefer original Chinese operas. Chinese artists are also learning how to produce professional operas. "Opera production is like architectural reasoning – you have to be precise and strive for the best," said Zhang Zhong, artistic director of Shanghai Opera House (SOH).

Last year, the Cologne Opera House sent its old props, bottles and a brooch to the Shanghai Conservatory of Music for the production of *The Ring of the Nibelung*. At first the Chinese staff was confused why they would waste money shipping such garbage from Germany.

"We thought they were being too mechanical," but they said it was part of being professional and taking responsibility to the audience. The audience gets to enjoy," Zhang said.

The Chinese teams have also been learning how to share in creative tasks. "All kinds of artists are involved in producing an opera, such as writers, singers, directors, composers, musicians and designers. The communication and collaboration can bring new cultural backgrounds and bring new ideas to this ancient art form," said Nicholas Payne, director of Opera

records his lovers' names, pictures and descriptions in his cell phone. This is today's opera as led by their directors – in the past, it was the conductor of the orchestra who led the opera.

"I let the directors experiment, even and extreme. But they must abide by the original music," said Giuseppe Tosca, artistic director of the NCPA. "Some directors even change or add chapters to the classic operas. No one would see a piece of art in a museum changed, either with colors added or a leg chopped off a sculpture."

Original works

A quick glance at the production list of any Chinese opera house is enough to see that China's opera creators are serious about producing original works.

The NCPA has created three new operas: *The Legend of Zhao Xishi* and *A Village Teacher*. "We explore how to deal with the combination of music and Chinese language," Deng said. "As an international work, we have to show both; we have to look to our own tradition."

Composer Tan Dun is a pioneer in exploring Chinese tradition. When he studied composing in New York more than 20 years ago, he was inspired by a north, who influenced Tan to be an opera composer.

"He told me opera is international. In the 17th and 18th century it was Italian business, but in the 19th century, it became European's. In the 20th century, America and Asia came in," Tan said. "He told me, 'If you want to be an opera composer, I hope you write a Chinese opera, not an Italian or European one.'"

Tan began looking for opera ideas in Chinese history. "The poem *Nine Songs* by Qu Yuan (339-278 BC) may be the earliest Chinese opera. It recounts stories and could be sung to music in ancient times," Tan said.

He recreated *Nine Songs* as an opera using traditional Chinese instruments instead of a pit orchestra. When he stayed in New York's Metropolitan Opera as a resident conductor, he met conductor Uwe Eric Lattmann. He watched almost every opera in those 10 years and spent six years writing *First Emperor*, a Chinese story with an orchestra.

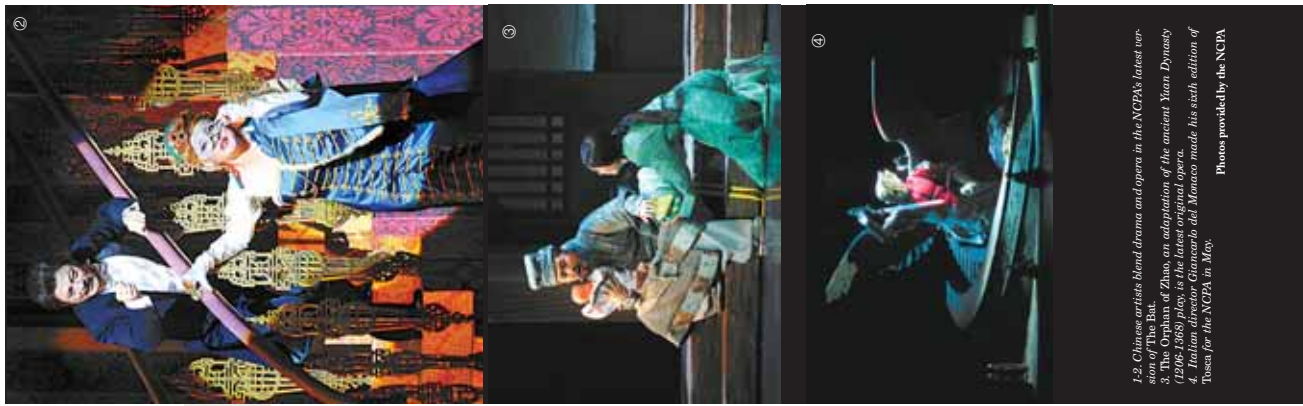
"I learned a lot from conducting the orchestra and communicating with the directors and singers. I realized that 'production and operation,'" he said.



Italian director Giancarlo del Monaco (left) adapts Tosca's story of love and hate, politics and conspiracy.



Cologne Opera's Don Giovanni sets the century-old character in the high-tech era.



1-2. Chinese artists blend drama and opera in the NCPA's latest version of *The Bat*.
3. The Orphan at Zhao, an adaptation of the ancient Yuan Dynasty (1296-1368) play, is the latest original opera.
4. Italian director Giancarlo del Monaco made his sixth edition of *Tosca* for the NCPA in May.

Photos provided by the NCPA

Antarctica a land of dreams

By Xinji Letu

Antarctica, the Earth's final pure frontier, is more than a white space: it is a canvas on which those who challenge its hard environment can realize their dreams, said Cai Jinghui, Lonely Planet's China representative at Ullens Center for Contemporary Art last week.

Last December, Cai visited Antarctica to write stories about his adventure. He said the beautiful, icy world is a place for dreamers, and that its stories range from the romantic to the legendary.

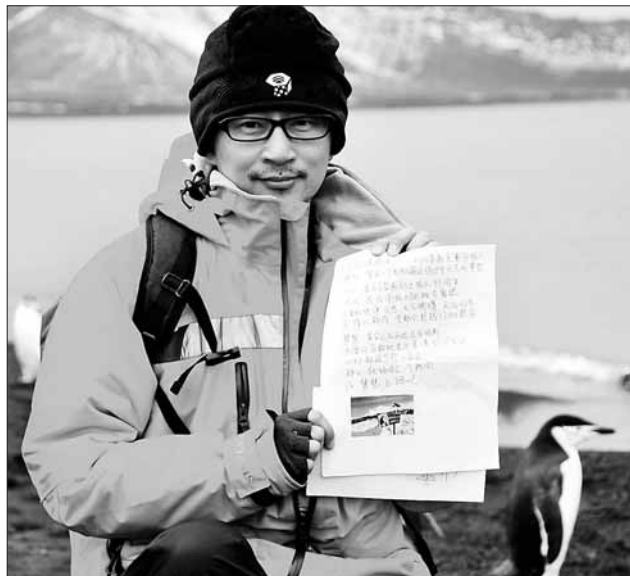
"The book is not a travel guide, but a collection of dreams," he said while discussing *Fall in Antarctica*.

Cai's trip began with crossing the monster waves of Drake Passage to land on the southernmost continent. Once there, he began collecting stories from the visitors, scientists and environmentalists he encountered.

He observed how the men and women who live on Antarctica interact with nature, and recorded their stories of love, tragedy, dreams and personal fulfillment. While most people see the continent as a no-man's land, excluded and desolate, "it in fact it is great place to meet people because you share the same experience with them," Cai said.

But the dream of reaching Antarctica came at a heavy historical cost.

More than 60 pages of Cai's book discuss early human expeditions to the South Pole. In his book, there is photo of a cross commemorating Robert F. Scott, the second



Cai Jinghui visited Antarctica last December.

Photo provided by UCCLA

person who reached the South Pole but died with his team on the way back. The large cross is engraved with a verse by Tennyson: "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." The goal of the book, Cai said, is to show

people that an Antarctic adventure is no more out of reach than any other dream. "If you have a strong desire to do something, go for it, no matter what," he said.

The frozen land is like a blank slate that



Fall in Antarctica
By Cai Jinghui, 352pp, Beijing Publishing House, 68 yuan

drowns out everything else so that adventurers can hear their inner voice. "It is the voice of the Antarctic, but also the voice of your own heart," Cai said.

Although Cai's book depicts people coming to the Antarctic to fulfill different dreams, they all share a tranquility and joy that come from human nature.

"No horizon is out of reach" is one of Cai's favorite phrases, and he said it fits the spirit of every Antarctic adventurer.

As the great Antarctic adventurer Ernest Shackleton said a century ago, "Exploring the unknown is human nature. Our only failure is that we no longer explore."

Adversity and survival in Paris under water

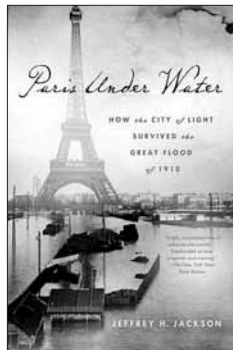
By Charles Zhu

Since ancient times, deluge from the Seine has been a long-standing problem for Paris, hence its motto: "She is tossed about by the waves but does not sink."

Jeffrey H. Jackson, a professor of history and director of environmental studies at Rhodes College in Memphis, recounts the damages the unruly waters have wrought on Parisians and of their courageous efforts to save their city in *Paris Under Water: How the City of Light Survived the Great Flood of 1910*.

Jackson, who worked in the Parisian archives for 10 years, said Paris was originally an island in the Seine. Over time, the city became a trading hub, a military stronghold and a residential area surrounded by fertile vegetable gardens and farms. However, its proximity to water made it vulnerable to flooding.

In January of 1910, Paris experienced an unprecedented inundation as unusual storms hit the city. The river that brought life to Paris quickly became a force of destruction. On January 21, the river swelled six feet above its usual level as a result of months of torrential rains, flooding in the tributaries and an early winter thaw. On January 28, the river crested at 20 feet above normal, a 250-year record. Flood water spilled over the Seine and rushed into the city, turning streets into streams and public squares into puddles. Torrential rainfall saturated the soil, and faulty engineering resulted in drowned Parisian homes, busi-



Paris Under Water
By Jeffrey H. Jackson,
272pp, Palgrave
Macmillan, \$16

nesses and museums.

One of the heroes in Jackson's book is Louis Lepine, Paris's prefect of police who wished Parisians would "see him as their man, the one who could keep them safe." His duties included, in addition to maintaining law and order, controlling traffic, fire-fighting and food supply. The flood gave the city's hooligans chances to loot, raised street violence and left food in short supply. What made it even worse was the fire at a suburban vinegar factory. Cesspools and sewers overflowed and the corpses of drowned rats filled the Seine.

Given the city's history of deep-seated social, religious and political strife, it was hard to imagine them pulling together to confront this unprecedented crisis.

Lepine worked alongside the teams of his men who went on rescue missions. Even as their sewers, transportation and electricity failed, Parisians of all backgrounds rallied to save the city and one another. Improvising techniques to keep Paris functioning and braving the dangers of collapsing infrastructure and looters, leaders and residents alike answered the call to action.

Many engineers, soldiers, clergy and the Red Cross participated in the effort. One was Monsieur Coutant, who helped evacuate as many as 70 people from his neighborhood.

Jackson tells balanced stories about self-sacrifice as well as egotism, violence and treachery that surfaced alongside loftier acts. He says Paris survived because it was a functioning human community, not because it was a modern metropolis. "Paris can serve as a beginning point for discussion about how urban residents can reconnect with one another, since it is impossible to know when nature may present another unexpected challenge and when depending on one's neighbors may determine one's survival."

Jackson said he discovered the Paris flood not long before Hurricane Katrina ravaged New Orleans. He compared Hurricane Katrina with the Paris flood in the book.

With the US still debating whether post-Katrina New Orleans should be rebuilt, the book offers a resounding yes.

Bookworm book listing

The Bookworm recommends the following bestsellers to *Beijing Today* readers.



Life and Death are Wearing Me Out
By Mo Yan, 552pp, Arcade Publishing, \$29.97

Nao Ximen, a landowner known for his generosity and kindness to his peasants, is not only stripped of his land and worldly possessions in the Land Reform Movement of 1948, but is cruelly executed, despite his protestations of innocence. In Hell, the king of the underworld allows him to return to earth, where he is reborn as a donkey, then an ox, pig, dog and monkey.



The Harafish
By Naguib Mahfouz,
416pp, Anchor, \$16.95
This epic story chronicles the history of the al-Nagi

family – a family that moves, over many generations, from the height of power and glory to the depths of decadence and decay. It begins with the tale of Ashur al-Nagi, a man who from humble beginnings grows to become a great leader. His descendants lose touch with their origins as they amass and then squander large fortunes, marry prostitutes when they marry at all and develop rivalries that end in death.



Big Girl Small
By Rachel DeWoskin,
304pp, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$25

With a singing voice that can shake an auditorium, Judy Lohden, a 16-year-old girl full of big dreams, should be the star of the local performing arts high school. So why is a girl this promising hiding out in a seedy motel room on the edge of town? The fact that the media is on her trail after a controversy that might bring down the whole school could have something to do with it. That scandal has something to do with the fact that she is 3 feet 9 inches (1.14 meters) tall. (By He Jiamwei)



The Smurfs television series premiered worldwide in 1981.

The Smurfs are back in town



By **Chu Meng**

Feeling blue? You can try to Smurf up your mood with some blue face paint and a big white hat.

The lovable, blue-skinned cartoon characters are making a huge comeback thanks to the new 3D movie scheduled to premiere in Chinese theaters this August. Smurf fans looking to recapture their childhood can also look forward to a re-mastered version of the 272-episode animated TV series in Chinese.

With their 50th anniversary around the corner, the Smurfs are coming back.

Wang Shuai, an advertiser born in the 1970s, is more than excited – especially after seeing the trailer for a new live-action, 3D Smurfs movie on the Sony Pictures Animation website last week.

"It made me remember seeking all the blue-skinned characters in my childhood," Wang said.

Despite their small stature, the Smurfs are set to turn 53 this year. First created by Belgian cartoonist Pierre Culliford, better known as "Peyo," the blue creatures living in the mushroom-shaped houses made their television debut in 1981 on the American National Broadcasting Company's network.

Five years later, the Smurfs spread to Chinese television and became an instant hit.

Wang is the organizer of the Blue Buddies Fan Club in Beijing. Its members gather to share their fascination with the blue villagers through statuettes, toys, publications, DVDs, video games and news. "Have a Smurfy day," their slogan, is a line borrowed from the show.

The new Smurf movie is set to open in Chinese theaters on August 10. Wang is getting pumped by watching his old DVDs of the cartoons and reading all the news about the movie that sneaks onto the Web.

Like the Smurf cartoons, the new movie follows the evil wizard Gargamel as he chases the tiny blue Smurfs out of their village and into the middle of Central Park in New York. Now trapped in the Big Apple,

the Smurfs have to find a way back to their village before Gargamel can track them down.

"The movie is directed by Raja Gosnell, the director behind the first Scooby-Doo live-action movie. So let's just say we are not expecting any Oscars here. But with *Avatar 2* still trapped inside James Cameron's head, this looks like the summer's only 'blue' movie," he said.

Wang first encountered the Smurfs when he started primary school. After seeing the first episode of the cartoon on TV at home, he and his classmates became obsessed with catching the show every day after school.

"In the beginning, we only had a black-and-white television. Each time, when the theme song came to an end, the Chinese logo would pop up. In China, the Smurfs were called "The Blue Pixies." I was kind of confused until our family got its first color television in 1987," Wang said.

The Smurfs, because of their tricky but innocent personalities, became a touchstone experience for China's 1970s and 1980s generation.

Girls tended to love Smurfette and Baby Smurf, while the boys liked Brainy Smurf and Grouchy Smurf.

In its latest event, the club participated in a multi-venue celebration of the 83rd anniversary of Peyo's birth. The mastermind behind the Smurfs was born June 25, 1928 and passed away in 1992. The group met last Saturday in Houhai for "Global Smurfs Day," an event being coordinated by Columbia Pictures and Sony Pictures Animation.

The events were synchronized around the world to try to set a

new Guinness World Record for "Largest Gathering of People Dressed as Smurfs" within a 24-hour period at Multiple Venues. The new record was set by a total of 4,617 fans, including 16 from Beijing, across 12 participating countries.

"There are few creations as iconic as The Smurfs. For more than 50 years, they have been a part of popular culture, appealing across generations. Some of their classic plots taught children to treat each other well and to behave appropriately within society," he said.

"The Smurfs and the Money Tree" talked about how Greedy Smurf brought a new thing called "money" into the Smurf village. Soon, every dish and hour of labor was being exchanged for money. Soon after, the Smurfs began fighting, and Papa Smurf moved to abolish money.

"It made me understand what money was at a young age," Wang said.

Many other classic episodes like "The Purple Smurfs" taught about unity and fighting with enemies, "Romeo and Smurfette" about friendship and "Gargamel's Time Trip" also left a deep impression on children at that time.

The new movie is one part of the Smurfs' return to China, a plan being organized by International Merchandising Promotions & Services, the Belgium-based licensor of all Peyo's characters.

Chengdu is building a Smurf theme park and will break ground before the end of the year. A re-mastered collection of all 272 episodes in Chinese is also being prepared for release.

"In 1980s, China only broadcast 53 episodes out of the total 272. I have to compensate for what I missed out on as a teenager by picking up these DVD sets whenever they come out," he said.



Starring Characters: Papa Smurf:

This wise old Smurf is the village chief. Peyo said he was 542 years old as of last spring. He always tries as much as he can to stop young Smurfs acting like crude humans. As an experienced alchemist, he often saves the Smurfs from danger using his knowledge.

Brainy Smurf:

He is the only Smurf foolish enough to take everything seriously. He spends all his time preaching to others and stupidly mumbling old quotes. Whatever Papa Smurf says is, for him, absolutely sacred. He is also a notorious tattletale.

Greedy Smurf:

He is the only Smurf who only thinks about eating. Whatever he finds, he tries to take a bite of. What he really wants are any desserts that he can sneak away from Chef Smurf.

Grouchy Smurf:

No matter what the other villagers say or suggest, Grouchy Smurf will be against it on principle. From his corner, he interrupts the others with the same negative comments such as "Me, I don't like ..." Deep down, he has a heart of gold.

Smurfette

As the only female Smurf in the village, Smurfette was originally created by the horrible wizard Gargamel to cause trouble amongst the Smurfs. However, alchemist Papa Smurf transformed her into a charming girl. Like a real woman, she also loves to play with the feelings of her sweethearts.



More than 2,100 people paraded in London for the multi-venue celebration of the 83rd anniversary of Peyo's birth on June 25. Members from the local Blue Buddies Fan Club dressed for the event in Houhai.

CFP Photo



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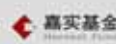
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Outdoor grill offers lamb legs, other delicious meats



An entire grilled sheep with a table of cold dishes, 888 yuan CFP Photo

By Annie Wei

In recent years, the city's summer grilling scene has upgraded from kebabs, fish and seafood to big hunks of meat, including whole sheep and lamb legs.

Sitting down over big pieces of meat and alcohol reminds people of Mongolian dining, where everyone eats and drinks loudly.

For a delicious outdoor meal, we recommend Tangongfu, known for its grilled lamb legs. It's located at Image Base near East Fourth Ring Road in an artsy area known to attract filmmakers and photographers.

One will be impressed by the dining atmosphere upon walking into the restaurant's front yard: it's packed with diners on weekends, on each table is a hot stove and a sizzling lamb leg, and young, shirtless men eat mutton kabobs while drinking beer.

The lamb leg (38 yuan per 500 grams) is a must. Each leg weighs about 2 kilograms. The waiter sets up a charcoal stove on the table and places a big lamb leg on it. After a few minutes, diners can slice the meat and skewer it onto kabobs for further roasting.

Don't expect to eat an entire lamb leg well by yourself. Not only is it too much meat, roasting an entire one will take several hours. If it's too tough cutting pieces from the leg, you can ask the chef to slice it and prepare them as kabobs for you.

The legs, which are never frozen, are prepared the night before. Each is marinated in salt and pepper, so it's tasty without added condiments. But for added taste, you can prepare your own sauce or mix and match pepper, cumin and sesame.

An entire roasted sheep is avail-

able for 888 yuan.

Don't forget to order cold beer. A barrel of Budweiser – three liters worth – is 78 yuan.

Other kinds of kabobs are not expensive, starting from 2 yuan for mutton. Cold dishes include edamame (10 yuan), peanuts (10 yuan) and bamboo shoots (12 yuan), which were fresh with a bit of sweetness and spiciness.

The fresh tripe kabob pot (20 yuan for 20 kabobs) is also another must. Each kabob has one piece of tripe, cooked in spicy oil and served in a pot. It tastes tender and spicy.

Tangongfu used to be located near Guomao. Many long-time customers followed it to its new location after it re-opened last year. It has 40 kinds of kabobs and home-style fried dishes like goose in stone hotpot, spicy bullfrogs and tofu.

The restaurant has a spacious outdoor seating space, including aged persimmon trees and crabapple trees. Indoor seating isn't ideal because the place gets poor ventilation.

The place is packed on weekend evenings, with a long line for outdoor seating. During peak hours, you might find it difficult to get a server's attention.

Anyone interested in hosting a barbecue party can give the restaurant a call. A deposit of 300 yuan is required for their equipment, which must be returned within two days.

Tangongfu

Where: East side of Image Base, 3 Guangqu Dong Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 9 am – midnight

Tel: 8795 5399

Cost: Average 100 yuan per person



Lamb leg, 38 yuan per 500 grams



Tripe kabob pot, 20 yuan



Cold Budweiser, 78 yuan

Photos by Yu Tingmei



Grilled eggplant, 8 yuan

Suzumei – Japanese for all-you-can-eat

By Annie Wei

The small Japanese restaurant and bar Suzumei at Xinyuanli has been praised by diners for its quality dishes and reasonable prices.

Tucked deep in a local residential neighborhood next to a small steamed-bun eatery, Suzumei is very cozy.

The restaurant has a regular menu and drink list, as well as special sashimi and grills of the day. The prices make diners feel they can order a bit of everything.

To start, we loved its Japanese-style steamed egg (12 yuan), as it was very tender and tasty.

Grilled chicken gizzards (8 yuan) were juicy and good. We liked the grilled chicken breast and Japanese plum and perilla (8 yuan) combination. Perilla gives the dish a nice aroma and balances the plum's sourness, but the chicken breast was a bit dry.

Saury (22 yuan), beef tongue (25 yuan) and eggplant (8 yuan) are all tasty.

We ordered the rice ball (8 yuan), which comes with Japanese plum, salmon or okaka, and Ochazuke (15 yuan), a typical Japanese dish where hot green tea is poured over white rice and topped with simple ingredients. One can choose Japanese plums or salmon. Although it looks simple, it has a very unique taste. To increase the flavor, you can season it with wasabi.

Japanese eel rice (78 yuan) includes two pieces of fat eel in a bowl of white rice. Some people like it, though some northern diners might think the eels are too sweet.

For drinks, we ordered the plum wine (starting from 20 yuan). The most expensive sake, Kubota Senjyu, costs just 130 yuan for a big bottle.

Suzumei

Where: 1st floor, Building 6, Sanyuanli Shengtai Xiaoqu, 2 Xinyuan Jie, Chaoyang District

Open: 6 pm – midnight, closed on Sundays

Tel: 6466 0204

Cost: Average 120 yuan per person



Fish tempura, 38 yuan for 3 pieces

Photos by Felix Gan



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 from 6:30 pm to 12 pm
 Every Thursday Anna Stamburg Band (Jazz, Blues and Funky Soul) from 9:30 pm
 Every Friday Anna Stamburg Band (Jazz, Blues and Funky Soul) from 9:30 pm
 Every Saturday Taste of Soul (Blues Rock) from 9:30 pm. The Elliot Johnson band is possibly the only authentic Chicago Blues Band in mainland China.
 Every Sunday Jam Session, Every musician in town is welcome to join us and show his talent (Blues Rock) from 9 pm



Ciro Pomodoro

Nali Potio, No.81 North Street

San Li Tan Chaoyang District

Tel: 52086008

Dancing in the framework of film script

By He Jianwei

Adapted from playwright Mei Feng's screenplay *Legend*, SMX Studio's latest modern dance, *Behind 3.0*, explores bodily and physical movements within the framework of the script. It began its second round of Beijing performances at Nine Theater on Thursday.

Legend was awarded Best Screenplay at the Cannes Film Festival in 2009. The film is about a private detective hired by a woman to investigate her husband, who is having an affair with another man.

The director of *Behind 3.0*, Xie Shu, drank with Mei one night at a restaurant. "Movies are the time lost in space," Mei said. His understanding of cinema inspired Xie to create a dance interpreting the story on a theater stage.

"We can change his words a little and make it, as theaters are spaces that change in time," Xie said.

When he started to make the dance, Xie thought it would be a love story. But when he finished, he realized that it was a story about choices. "When people make choices based on their

desires, everything gets destroyed," he said.

He described the theme of the dance thus: "the lust stays inside [the main character's] body and forms a trap of memory. He is locked forever."

Film can illustrate story using dialogue, but dance can only do it through movements. Wayson Poon, the Hong Kong choreographer of *Beyond 3.0*, said bodylines and the rhythm of body movements can deliver sufficient information to the audience. "The body has its own memories. Temperature, smell and sound created during the contact between two bodies can be retained in one body," Poon said.

Founded in 2010 in Beijing by Xie and Poon, the SMX studio aims to break boundaries of traditional dance by using body language.

Behind 3.0

Where: Nine Theater (TNT), Chaoyang Culture Center, 12 Jintai Li, Chaoyang District

When: July 1-3, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-200 yuan, 50 yuan for students
Tel: 6551 6930



Photo provided by SMX Studio

Upcoming

Nightlife Gangzi - bringing you onto the grasslands

Humai, or throat singing, is a distinctive vocal style of Mongolia. Gangzi combines humai with modern music, creating a unique effect.

Where: Jianghu Bar, 7 Dongmianhua Hutong, Jiaodaokou Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District
When: July 7, 9 pm
Admission: 30 yuan
Tel: 6401 5269

Stage in August

Concert Myung-whun Chung and Asia Philharmonic Orchestra

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: August 4, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-800 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Sun Yingdi Piano Recital

Where: Multi-functional Theater of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: August 5, 7:30 pm
Admission: 200-280 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Roger Lord Piano Recital

Where: Forbidden City Concert Hall (inside Zhongshan Park), 18 Zhaochengyuan Lu, Xicheng District

When: August 21, 7:30 pm
Admission: 20-100 yuan
Tel: 6417 7845

Dance

Rojas and Rodriguez's Flamenco

Where: Opera House of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: August 13-14, 7:30 pm
Admission: 160-680 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Drama

Crosstalk Travelers

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: August 5-7, 7:30 pm
Admission: 190-900 yuan
Tel: 6551 8058

Hysterics

Where: Nine Theater (TNT), Chaoyang Culture Center, 12 Jintai Li, Chaoyang District

When: August 25-28, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-200 yuan, 50 yuan for students
Tel: 6551 6930

Opera

Rigoletto

Where: Opera House of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: August 25-27, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-800 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

(By He Jianwei)

Friday, July 1

5 Movie The Great Ecstasy of Woodcarver Steiner (1974)

This 1974 documentary by German filmmaker Werner Herzog is about carpenter Walter Steiner, who won fame as a ski jumper. Herzog has called this "one of my most important films."

Where: UCCA, 798 Art District, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 7 pm
Admission: 15 yuan
Tel: 8459 9269

Nightlife

Star Industry China Tour

Legendary Belgian band Star Industry will celebrate the 15th anniversary of its founding. The band plays gothic-industrial style and is an extraordinary live act.

Where: Mao Livehouse, 111 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District
When: 8 pm

Admission: 80 yuan
Tel: 6402 5080

Exhibition



Hong Kong Heritage Tourism Expo

To celebrate the 14th anniversary of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), the Beijing Office and the Commissioner for Heritage's Office of HKSAR present an exhibition on Hong Kong's cultural history and city landscapes.

Where: The Orange, Sanlitun Village, Gongti Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until July 5, 10 am - 10 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 8795 4556

Sunday, July 3

Movie Bloody Morning (1992)

Adapted from the book *Chronicle of A*

Death Foretold by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, this film is about a schoolteacher in a rural Chinese village killed by two villagers who suspect him of seducing their sister.

Where: Broadway Cinematheque, 2/F Building 4, north section of Museum of Modern

Art (MOMA), 1 Xiangheyuan Lu, Dongcheng District

When: 4 pm
Admission: 40 yuan
Tel: 8438 8258 ext. 8008

Nightlife

Zhang Xiaobing Beijing Tour

Folk musician Zhang Xiaobing, based in Fenghuang, Hunan Province, performs music involving many traditional and folk instruments, including the dazi and the luou.

Where: Gulou 121 Bar, 121 Jiu Gulou Dajie, Dongcheng District

6 Saturday, July 2

Exhibition ACTION Group Exhibition

This group exhibition presents videos, photographs and other works from various renowned artists including Chen Chieh-Jen, Huang Ran, Liu We, Xu Zhen, Wang Jianwei, Wu Shan-zhuan and Zhou Xiaohu.

Where: Long March Project, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until August 28, daily except Monday, 10 am - 6 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 5978 9768

Nightlife

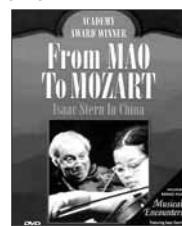
Nanwu

Nanwu, a young local band, is presenting its first unplugged mini concert of this summer on Saturday.

Where: Jiangjinjiu Bar, 2 Zhongku Hutong, Dongcheng District

When: 9 pm
Admission: 30 yuan
advance purchase, 40 yuan at the door
Tel: 13681492624

Movie



From Mao to Mozart: Isaac Stern in China (1981)

This documentary tells the story of famous violinist and music teacher Isaac Stern, the first American musician who collaborated with the China Central Symphony Society (now the China National Symphony Orchestra). It is about Stern's rehearsals and performances of Mozart's and Brahms' violin concertos with the famous Chinese conductor Li Delun, who also acted as his guide and translator.

Where: Guang, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 2 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 5762 3061

Where: Mi Space, 51 Fangjia Hutong, Dongcheng District

When: Until July 10, daily except Monday, 1-9 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6405 5477

(By Xinji Letu)



Exhibition

Cris Yang Doll Clothing Solo Exhibition

In 2002, Cris Yang began collecting various dolls including Blythe, Momoko and Yosd. She has a passion for making doll clothing. This exhibition shows her works created between 2007 and 2011.

Tea not healthy for all

By Han Manman

Tea is one of the most consumed beverages in the world. It helps refresh tired minds and bodies. With more reports on the benefits of drinking tea, such as the prevention of cardiovascular disease and cancer, more are beginning to drink tea in their daily life.

However, Chinese experts recently found drinking tea excessively may be dangerous, especially for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Dangers for pregnant women

A recent investigation, conducted by the Peking University Institute of Reproductive and Child Health, found that daily tea drinking during pregnancy was associated with an elevated risk of neural tube defects (NTDs).

NTDs are a group of malformations that result from the failure of the neural tube to close within 28 days after conception. NTDs are an important cause of prenatal mortality, and infants who survive often have lifelong disabilities.

Ren Aiguo, director of the research team, said the survey followed four rural counties in Shanxi Province from 2002 to 2007. Experts interviewed the young mothers of 631 children with NTD and 857 healthy children about their tea drinking habits before pregnancy and during their first trimester.

The survey found that women who drank tea every day had a three times greater risk of giving

birth to a child with NTD.

He said the elevated risk associated with daily tea drinking remained after adjusting for maternal age, educational level, occupation and periconceptional folic acid supplementation.

Ren said a separate survey in Japan found that women who drank four or more cups of tea a day had a deficiency of folic acid in the blood.

Ren suggested that pregnant and breastfeeding women should limit their tea intake or begin taking a folic acid supplement. He said they should also eat more foods rich in folic acid, such as green vegetables, oranges, beans and animal livers.

Harmful effects

While tea can benefit the health of most people, this is only true in moderation. Excessive tea consumption is universally damaging to one's health.

The most active ingredient in tea is caffeine. It has a stimulating effect on the brain and central nervous system and increases

heart rate and blood pressure.

Caffeine can also increase blood sugar levels, meaning diabetes patients should drink with caution. The same applies to those with psychological disorders, especially anxiety or panic disorders, and overactive thyroid or hyperthyroidism.

There are several conditions that may be caused by drinking excessive tea, including indigestion. Tea is slow to digest, as its tannins impede the action of ptyalin, a digestive saliva that acts like cooked starch. The slowed digestion may cause gas, diarrhea and constipation.

Overconsumption of tea has also been linked to kidney disorders. Experiments show that five cups of tea increase urine amount by 400 to 500 percent in people vulnerable to kidney ailments. This continued stimulation of kidneys by caffeine might damage them. Tea could also promote kidney stones because of its high concentration of oxalates.

Moreover, tea drinking tends to aggravate premenstrual syndrome. According to research conducted by Annette Rossignol, an associate professor of public health at Oregon University, women in China who drank between one and four cups of tea a day were twice as likely to have premenstrual syndrome. Drink-

ing eight cups of tea increased the incidence of premenstrual syndrome 10 times.

Drinking too much tea can also cause urgent urination, giddiness, sore throat and paralysis.

People who should avoid tea

1. Anyone predisposed to heartburn and stomach ulcers. Tea can aggravate these conditions.

2. Anyone taking medication. Tea can interfere and interact with certain medications, and should be avoided for up to two hours after taking any medication.

3. Anyone sensitive to caffeine. If you are restless, irritable or prone to sleeping problems, tea can worsen your symptoms. Be especially careful if you have liver disease, as blood levels of caffeine can build up fast.

4. Anyone with a sensitive stomach. The caffeine in tea leaves may give people stomach cramps. Moreover, tea itself is a potent stimulant of gastric acid. Spike your tea with some milk and sugar to inhibit the release of gastric acid.

5. Anyone with an iron deficiency. Tea is known as a "negative calories" beverage. Not only does it contain virtually no calories, it also blocks the absorption of certain nutrients. Green tea extract reduces the absorption of non-heme iron by 25 percent.

6. Anyone with premenstrual syndrome. Studies have found that green tea can

cause the body's estrogen levels to crash.

7. Young children. If you have young kids, it's best if they don't drink tea. The caffeine in tea can be too stimulating for young children, and the tannins may block the absorption of proteins and fats in children.

8. Anyone with a Vitamin B deficiency. Tea reduces the absorption of Vitamin B.

9. Anyone taking tea extract tablets. Some people prefer consuming tea tablets to brewing hot tea. That is fine, but there is a risk of overdose.

10. When you have or are prone to forming kidney stones. Kidney stones are mineral deposits made up of calcium, uric acid or the amino acid cysteine. At least three quarters of kidney stones are composed of calcium combined with phosphate or oxalic acid. Green tea is rich in oxalic acid.

11. Anyone using weight loss teas. While green tea is considered safe for long-term consumption, slimming and weight loss teas tend to be laced with laxative herbs such as senna leaf and rhubarb root. They can be dangerous when consumed in large quantities.



CFP Photo

Kicking back at a Qing resort and temples in Chengde

Zhang Dongya

The 11th Chengde International Tourism Culture Festival and Wind Music Art Festival opened at Dehuimen Square last Sunday. Dozens of marching bands from Beijing, Hebei Province, Macau, Taiwan and South Korea performed to celebrate the annual event. Chengde, an ancient city in Hebei, is known for its Mountain Resort and imperial temples. It served an important role during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) and contains many historic sites related to the imperial court and Qing emperors.



The Kangxi Emperor's inscription in the Mountain Resort



The opening ceremony of the annual tourism festival in Chengde features Qing history. Photo by Qiu Xiang



Ancient walls in Chengde

Photo by Qiu Xiang



The 11th Chengde International Tourism Culture Festival and Wind Music Art Festival was organized by the Hebei Tourism Administration, Chengde Municipal Government and China Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles (CASBE).

At the opening ceremony, 15 symphonic bands from Beijing, Hebei, Macau, Taiwan and South Korea performed at Huidemen Square in the Mountain Resort, then marched down Wulie Boulevard. A live performance of the play *Kangxi Ceremony* was also staged.

The bands, including the People's Liberation Army's navy band and the Beijing military band, will continue performing at Chengde Theater for locals. Other bands, including a band consisting of people from the Taroko ethnic group in Taiwan, will join locals for more performances.

Travel enterprises and agencies from several countries and regions, including the UK, Russia, South Korea and Hong Kong, attended

the festival.

"Chengde is aiming to build an international city for tourism that will bring unprecedented vitality to the local tourism industry," said Zhao Fenglou, mayor of the Chengde Municipal Government, at the ceremony. "We hope the festival will always be a win-win for all participants."

Chengde has received about 4 million domestic and overseas visitors in the first half of the year, bringing in 2.7 billion yuan – a 21.9 percent increase compared with last year.

Qing Mountain Resort

The Mountain Resort is the largest imperial garden constructed during Qing Emperor Kangxi's reign. It took 10 years to build the resort and another 13 to expand it. It was a destination for Qing Emperors from Kangxi to Qianlong who wanted to escape Beijing's summer heat and do administrative work.

The resort, with both mountains and rivers, contains more than 120 complex constructions, includ-

ing palaces, pavilions, towers, terraces and halls.

Entering from the south gate, you will see the large board with Emperor Kangxi's inscription. It is special because of a wrong stroke in one of his characters, which some historians believe was intentional because it was a way to "balance" the calligraphy.

While the resort is named after a mountain, it's the water that gives the place its best sights. Sai Lake is a large body of water consisting of nine small lakes in various shapes.

Continued on page 21...



A live performance of Kangxi Ceremony was staged at the opening ceremony, with 15 symphonic bands.

Photos by Mockingbird





Large performances of a play called Kangxi Ceremony began in June. Photo by Qiu Xiang



Putuozongcheng Temple, also dubbed "Little Potala Palace," was built according to the design of the Potala Palace in Lhasa.

Photos by Mockingbird

...continued from page 20

Rehe, or Hot River, has an important history in Chengde and the Mountain Resort. It was a name of a province in the Republic of China period (1912-1949), with Chengde being the provincial capital. The Mountain Resort was also called Hot River Palace at that time.

It is said the Hot River flowed through Wulie River in Chengde. Because a hot spring poured into the river, the Hot River never freezes. Today, a stone tablet with "Rehe" stands beside the water.

The resort also keeps a large number of articles related to Qing emperors. As a summer resort, Qing emperors spent about half a year in Chengde every year. There were palaces and halls where emperors lived, dealt with administrative work and held ceremonies. Original architecture and daily articles are still preserved. To the southwest of the palace is a large area of pastureland, with luxuriant grass and trees.

Getting there: Take Bus 5, 6, 11, 15, 17, 26 or 118 to Bishu Shanzhuang stop.

Open: 6 am - 6 pm
Tel: 0314-2161 132

Admission: 120 yuan (April 1 - October 31)

Imperial temples

Around the Mountain Resort, there are 12 imperial temples, including two constructed by the Kangxi Emperor and nine by the Qianlong Emperor. Eight of them are still open now, and together they are known as the Outlying Eight Temples because they are located outside of the Gubeikou Great Wall, an important section between Beijing and Chengde.

Among the most famous temples is a Tibetan Buddhist temple called Puning Temple, or the Temple of Universal Peace. First built in 1755 during

the reign of Qianlong, it is the largest place for Buddhist ceremonies and activities in northern China and also the only temple where Lamas live and hold activities among the eight temples. It is known for having the biggest gold-painted wooden Buddha in the world: a Guanshiyin Bodhisattva with one thousand arms and eyes.

Puning Temple

Where: Puning Lu, Shuangqiao District, Chengde

Getting there: Take Bus 6 or 28 to Dafosi stop.

Open: 7:30 am - 6 pm
Tel: 0314-2058 203
Admission: 80 yuan

Another temple, Putuozongcheng Temple, also dubbed "Little Potala Palace," was built according to the design of the Potala Palace in Lhasa. Constructed in 1767 by Qianlong, it is the largest temple in the Outlying Eight Temples.

Putuozongcheng Temple

Where: Shizigou Lu, Shuangqiao District, Chengde

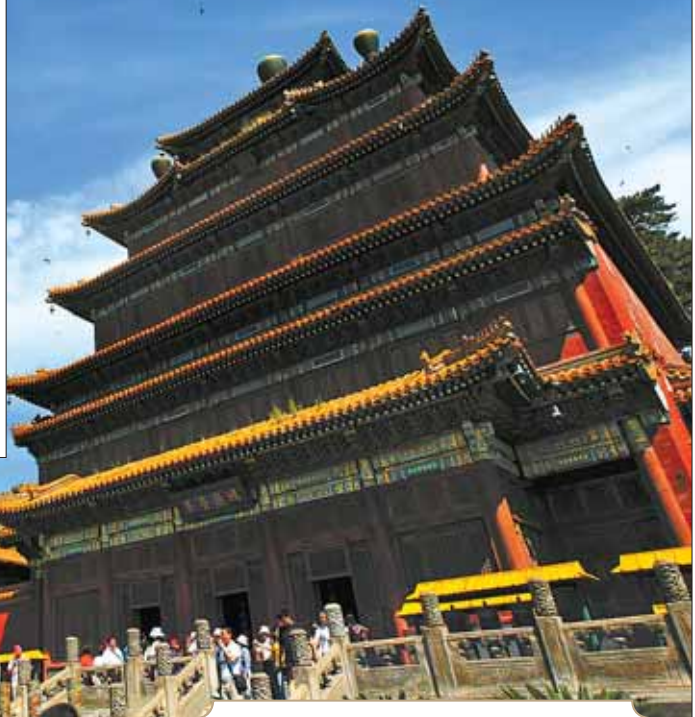
Getting there: Take Bus 118 to Putuozongcheng Zhimiao stop.

Open: 7:30 am - 5:30 pm
Tel: 0314-2163 072
Admission: 80 yuan

Historical live-action performance

Since early June, a large-scale play called *Kangxi Ceremony* has been ongoing. Set in Yuanbao Mountain, a typical mountain with Danxia landform in Chengde, it depicts the Kangxi Emperor's historic decision to construct the Mountain Resort in Chengde. About 1,000 performers and 200 horses are used in the play, which will run until October.

Tel: 400 101 1122
Admission: 198-598 yuan



Puning Temple, a Tibetan Buddhist temple in Chengde, is the largest place for Buddhist ceremonies and activities in northern China. Photo by Qiu Xiang

Chengde, Hebei Province, is adjacent to Beijing, Tianjin, Zhangjiakou, Liaoning and Inner Mongolia. Getting to Chengde: The fast train from Beijing to Chengde takes four and a half hours, and the ticket is 41 yuan. Or you can take a long-distance coach, which takes about four hours (50 yuan).

Dining

Taste of Japan

Get a taste of Japan with Kobe Japanese Restaurant's a la carte menu, now available at an unbeatable price that includes beer, soft drinks and fruit juice. Kobe serves the best of the Japanese kitchen, such as sushi, sashimi and tempura. Come and enjoy its intimate setting and warm, attentive service.

Where: Kobe Japanese Restaurant, Park Plaza Beijing, 25 Zhichun Lu, Haidian District

Cost: Lunch, 138 yuan; dinner, 168 yuan with unlimited hot and cold Japanese sake. Discounts available for group bookings: 4-6 save 10 percent, 7-9 save 15 percent, 10 or more save 20 percent.

Tel: 8235 6699



Dim sum at Grand Millennium Beijing



Come try traditional Cantonese dim sum by Hong Kong Master Chef Cheung Fai Man at Yao Chi Chinese restaurant. Cheung makes 60 varieties of dim sum, including braised crab and mushroom and glutinous rice with chicken lotus leaf.

Where: Yao Chi Chinese restaurant, Grand Millennium Beijing, Fortune Plaza, 7

Dongsanhuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

Cost: Weekend special - dim sum buffet 138 yuan per person, reservations recommended (15 percent gratuity)

Tel: 8587 6888 ext. 3013

Chinese dim sum set menu

Master dim sum chef Liew has created a special dim sum set available daily.

Come and indulge in all hand-made dim sum and all designed to "touch the heart"!

Where: The Regent Beijing, 99 Jinbao Jie, Dongcheng District

When: Daily, 11 am - 2 pm

Cost: 88 yuan (15 percent gratuity)

Tel: 8522 1789

Durian sponge cake available at

Grand Millennium Beijing

This new signature Durian Sponge Cake is a perfect, delectable accompaniment with your tea or coffee.

Single slices of cake are 38 yuan each, or 66 yuan with a cup of coffee or tea.

Where: Lobby Lounge, Grand Millennium Beijing, Fortune Plaza, 7 Dongsanhuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

Dim sum and more

Four Seasons is presenting a creative selection of dim sum with Thai, Indian, Vietnamese and Korean influences.

Choose from chicken tikka steamed buns, Bulgogi spring rolls, sweet soy marinated pork belly yakitori or beef rendang Samosas.

Dim sum is a new way to enjoy old favorites.

Where: Four Season Chinese Restaurant, Park Plaza Beijing, 25 Zhichun Lu, Haidian District

Cost: 28 yuan (15 percent gratuity)

Tel: 8235 6699

"MEAT Me!" Fridays at Hilton Elements

Hilton Beijing's celebrated Elements Restaurant will be serving up a sensational buffet of the city's finest cuts of meat, including Australian beef tenderloin, German sausage, prime rib and lamb chops and barbecued ribs, kabobs and veal. These delectable cuts will be accompanied by a variety of dishes from all over the world such as soups, salads, pasta and sushi, as well as refreshing chilled beer and soft drinks.

Where: Elements Restaurant, Hilton Beijing, 1 Dongfang Lu, Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

Cost: 328 yuan, including local beer and soft drinks; add 108 yuan for house wine and Stella Artois draft beer (15 percent gratuity)

Tel: 5865 5020



Cost: 38 yuan and 66 yuan (15 percent gratuity)

Tel: 8587 6888 ext. 3011



Hotel

Marriott International opens first dedicated China Reservation Center

Marriott International recently opened its first dedicated Global Reservation Sales and Customer Care Center in China. Located in the Pearl River New City district in the city of Guangzhou, this facility will service Marriott Worldwide Reservations, Customer Care and Marriott Rewards for the company's hotels throughout greater China.

"Marriott International is committed to China and to serving our ever-increasing number of Chinese guests in a location that offers impressive labor talent at a great value," said L. Kaye Dengel, Marriott International's senior vice president of global sales and customer care, at the opening of the center.

"With more than 50 hotels in China, and at least another 100 in some form of planning, China is a crucially important market to us - and is now by far our second biggest market anywhere in the world."

The new Global Reservations and Customer Care Center is a key part of Marriott International's Asia Pacific reservations strategy and opened with the latest technology, infrastructure and 45 dedicated associates specially trained and focused on sales and the customer experience.

Former British Prime Minister Brown chooses Grand Millennium

Grand Millennium Beijing had the pleasure of welcoming former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown from June 11 to 14, 2011.

Brown was met by Gino Tan, general manager of Grand Millennium Beijing, on his arrival.

China Eastern is Marriott's newest airline partner

Marriott Rewards members can now earn Eastern Miles points for every hotel stay at more than 3,400 hotels around the world.

Members will also be able to redeem Marriott Rewards points for Eastern Miles points. This latest addition brings Marriott Rewards' total roster of airline partners to 32.

In addition, Marriott Rewards members can convert their Marriott Rewards points into Eastern Miles points at the particular exchange rates.

Marriott Rewards has no blackout dates and members can earn and redeem points at more than 3,400 Marriott International hotels around the world. In addition to hotels and frequent flier miles, members can also redeem points for merchandise, cruises and car rentals.



Airline

Best of British Bubbles

British Airways has become the first airline to serve a British sparkling wine on its flights and in its lounge at Heathrow Terminal 5.

The sparkling wine, Balfour Brut Rosé from the Hush Heath winery in Kent, will be served alongside a range of champagnes in first class between July and September.

The bold move by British Airways signifies staunch support for British growers. As well as English sparkling wine, British produce including Herefordshire beef, Loch Fyne fresh fish and Cropwell Bishop Stilton also feature regularly on the airline's menus.

"No other airline has ever served English fizz to its customers. By giving our British and international customers an exclusive taste of the best of Britain, we are putting English wine making firmly on the map. We look forward to hearing what our customers think," Lynn McClelland, British Airways' head of catering, said.

"British Airways first class customers expect the very best, and we are delighted to be able to offer them this fantastic English wine. In tastings, it has performed brilliantly, and we believe it will really hold its own at 35,000 feet (7,620 meters)," Andrew Sparrow, British Airways wine buyer at Bibendum, said.

(By Zhang Nan)



Event

First non-group tourists from mainland arrive in Taiwan

About 290 tourists from Beijing, Shanghai and Xiamen not affiliated with tour groups arrived in Taiwan on Tuesday, the first group from the mainland that was allowed to visit individually. Mainland tourists traveling by themselves have more opportunities to meet locals and get to know the island better. The mainland individual tour to Taiwan officially opened on June 12, and regulations for mainland residents visiting Taiwan were issued on June 20. About 33 travel agencies in Beijing, Shanghai and Xiamen have the right to arrange Taiwan trips.

(By Zhang Dongya)

Chinglish story

This column focuses on Chinglish mistakes in our daily life. If you have any experiences to share, send them to Li Zhixin at lizhixin@ynet.com.

Chicken with saliva?

By Wei Xi

My friend Philip is one of those who prefers eating in small local diners rather than five-star restaurants, and every time he travels to a new place, the first thing he will do is find a diner to have a meal.

Last weekend, he came to Beijing for the first time and asked me to dine out in a hutong.

"Why do you always like to eat in such small places? I don't think the dishes are clean enough," I said.

"But it's only here where you can truly taste traditional Beijing dishes,"

Philip replied. "Now let's see what they have on the menu – you'll have to translate the names of the dishes for me."

Although Philip is conversant in Chinese, he is only able to recognize a few characters.

"Now I see why you called me out to dine with you," I joked.

As the waitress handed me the menu, I found it had English names for each dish.

"Here you are," I said, passing the menu to Philip. "It has English names."

But as he read the menu, I saw a strange look form on

his face.

"What's up?" I asked. "Nothing to stir the appetite?"

"You Chinese are strange! Do you often cook chicken with your saliva?"

"What? That's gross!"

I took the menu and began to read it carefully and soon burst into laughter.

"Were you reading 'mouth-watering chicken'? It does not mean it is cooked with saliva, but that it's so delicious that it'll have your mouth running."

"So I suppose the four-glad meatballs mean meatballs that bring you happiness, right?"

"Now you're talking," I said.

"This dish is used during the Spring Festival as a way of wishing good luck and happiness to the family."

"I see. So let's take those two, and what shall we have for a drink?"

"As you prefer fancy liquor, I'd suggest the Two Pots of Heads."

Philip looked worried. "I'm sorry, what's the name again?"

"Two Pots of Heads," I answered, happy to see his frightened reaction.

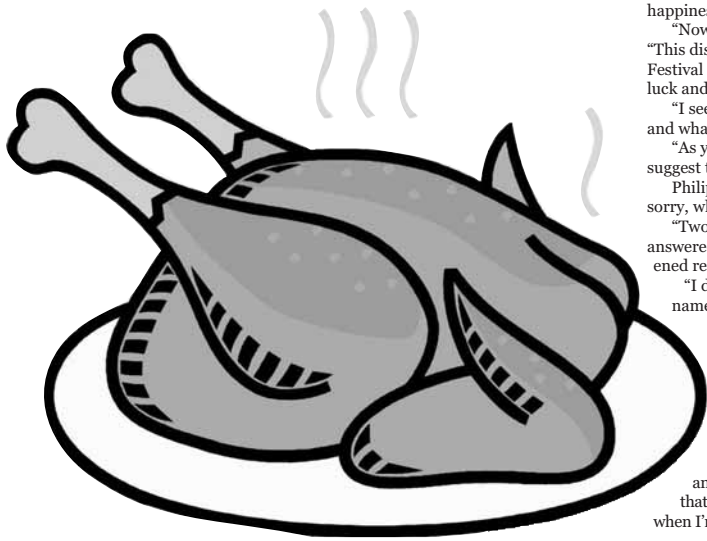
"I didn't catch that. The name's bloody."

"Actually, it's a twice-matured alcohol," I explained.

"It is usually cooked and matured twice in a pot."

Hearing this, Philip's interest was piqued.

"I think I'd like to try it and tell my friends back home that I had 'two pots of heads' when I'm back in the States."



Blacklist

This is a column of words or phrases commonly misused by Chinese speakers. If you're planning to be an English teacher, reporter or employee of a multinational company, then watch out for this page each week

1. The church was collapsed during the earthquake.

Professor Zhu Shida (ZSD): Though the verb to collapse is both a transitive and intransitive verb, it is mainly an intransitive verb. The church fell or caved in on its own. For instance, Sticking a pin into a balloon causes it to collapse. The roof collapsed as a result of the fire. Or figuratively, His business collapsed when his health gave out. The labor and management negotiations collapsed after several meetings. In all these cases, you would never say "to be collapsed." So, the sample sentence should be: The church collapsed during the earthquake.

Terry Boyd-Zhang (TBZ): Start by reviewing past tenses and pay attention when you read. This is a very common mistake and, with a bit of concentration, is easily remedied.

2. China is lagged behind in the talent war.

ZSD: Here is the same error as in the previous case. To lag may intransitively mean to move too slowly, to fall behind. For instance, Some of the runners began to lag at the bell lap. Interest in the project began to lag. The president is making certain that the peace momentum does not lag. Conversation lagged and the silences got longer. So, it is not that China is lagged behind in the talent war, but that China lags behind.

TBZ: In my opinion, the problem here is not grammatical but conceptual. China lags behind in nothing, it's just that talented people need more opportunities to demonstrate their abilities – just like everywhere else in the world.

3. The church was a destination of wedding photographers.

ZSD: This is a very interesting linguistic case for discussion. The problem with it is that it is ambiguous; it is not clear in meaning and this it may lead to misinterpretation or misunderstanding. What does the phrase "wedding photographers" mean? Does it mean those photographers who are going to get married? Or does it mean the photographers who take wedding photos as a profession? The phrase may be understood both ways. We'd better avoid using those ambiguous phrases, as it may cause misunderstanding. So, we should make a little change to make this clearer in meaning: The church was a destination of wedding photographs. It is a destination for photos, not for marrying photographers.

TBZ: In the professor's sentence, I would change the "of" to "for": a place for taking wedding photos.

4. At finally

ZSD: We have the phrase "at last" or "finally," we don't have the phrase "at finally." This is obviously an invention by the writer and it is an incorrect invention. We have "ultimately," "on the last occasion" and "at long last" to express the idea of coming after all others. For instance, At last, the baby fell asleep. At long last, sometime this month the Los Angeles Public Library is expected to start circulations of discs. We must not be whimsical in English writing.

TBZ: Good advice! I think when a person is first learning something, such as a new language, there is just some hard work that must be put in. This hard work – some memorization, some learning of words, phrases and grammar rules – acts as a foundation for further intermediate and advanced study. Remembering relatively simple expressions, such as "finally" and "at last" isn't too much to ask for.

Persevere and be patient with yourself. Look at small children – they listen and absorb language for about three years before they start trying to speak, then write, then really learn about their native language. If English is your second (or third or fourth...) language, be kind to yourself and proud of your successes. At the same time, be strict with yourself to learn it correctly. "At finally" is wrong – no other way to say it.

Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify Chinglish in public areas. If you see any Chinglish signs, please send a picture of it to lizhixin@ynet.com together with your name and address.

Construction for the Inconvenience Here, Please Forgive Us

By Terry Boyd-Zhang

Honestly, some construction seems to serve no other purpose except to be inconvenient!

I have experienced a lot of inconvenient construction during my free-rolling days, from neighboring apartment renovations to full-scale tear-downs of lovely communities, making way for progress and modernity.

One of the worst was when the management of a bankrupt condominium began work they could not afford to pay for on the unsafe underground parking at my rental condo in Toronto. The drilling went on for months and it was so loud that I could not even make a phone call.

Just after I moved into my current place, someone got married and started renovations in the building next door. I was ready to "inconvenience" those newlyweds, let me tell you!

I swear that the next renovations



I want to hear are my own. Unfortunately, at more than 33,000 yuan per square meter, this sound is unlikely to be heard during this lifetime.

I cannot figure out what happened with this sign because it is pretty straightforward in Chinese. In English, grammar is often reversed, so perhaps the translator thought they were being clever to switch it around.

Ci is a fancy word for "here," di means "this place, here" and shigong is "carrying out construction." In English,

we might put a comma here. Next we see *gei* ("gives, provides, supplies") and *nin* (the polite form of "you.")

Now, if you are studying how to write Chinese characters, you will see that the regular form of "you" is at the top of the character and a "heart" is at the bottom. You have to use "heart" to speak to "you" formally.

Then comes *dailai* ("to bring about, to bring upon someone") and *bu* ("no, not") *bian* ("convenient, simple"). You may also see this word near the toilet, for it also means to relieve oneself. Think about it – is life not more convenient after a good excretion?

Lastly, on the sign, we have *jing-qing* (a formal word for "please," the regular word is just *qing*) and finally *yuantiang* (forgive).

It should be something like: Construction. Sorry for the inconvenience. Sorry for the inconvenience of correct grammatical construction!



“ Spring Festival is their only chance for reunion. ”

Inside every migrant's struggle

By Wei Xi

The Chinese migrant worker was *TIME Magazine's* Person of the Year in 2009. During that year, migrant workers contributed greatly to the world's economic recovery.

But those contributions came from sacrifice.

Director Fan Lixin followed the lives of Zhang Changhua and his family members – representatives of the workers who “contribute most to the flourishing of the Chinese economy, but get the least.”



Director Fan Lixin

Last Train Home, a documentary about a migrant worker's family, reveals the conflicts between earning a living and maintaining the parent-child relationship.

The film follows a family of migrant workers for three years as they return home for the Spring Festival.

The father, Zhang Changhua, and mother, Chen Suqin, have worked in Guangzhou for almost 17 years, leaving their daughter Zhang Qin and son Zhang Yang in a remote Sichuan Province village with their aging grandparents.

Like other migrant workers, Zhang Changhua and his wife work day and night in bad conditions to earn a meager income, with which they hope to give their children a better life and education. They hope to see their children assimilate into the city.

But each year, the couple gets a chance to celebrate during Spring Festival. After days of standing in line to get a ticket, Zhang and his wife board a train to return home and see their children.

But with their parents gone for so many years, Zhang's children, especially 17-year-old daughter Zhang Qin, have developed feelings of resentment. Bored with life in the small village and yearning for exciting experiences in the city, Zhang Qin wants to quit school and search for work.

“I work far from home and can only speak to you on the phone. I never had access to the kind of education you do,” Zhang Changhua says. “There are things I don't know how to tell you. I hope both of you study hard, so you can succeed when you grow up.”

But his words fall on deaf ears: Zhang Qin quits school to become a migrant worker at a garment factory in Guangzhou.

“Freedom is happiness,” she says.

“These migrant workers contribute the most to the Chinese economy, but they get the least. In addition to the hardships they suffer each day, they have to endure loneliness as they live far from home,” director Fan Lixin said.

Fan used to work at a TV station, and on his various assignments across the country he saw the large urban-rural gap firsthand.

“It was hard for me to forget what I saw, so I started to pay close attention to migrant workers and decided to record the lives of this special group.”

A better material life is not enough for the healthy development of the children migrants leave behind. The lack of parental care creates a severe rift of estrangement between the two generations, Fan said.

Another problem is the future of those children.

“These children, with all their mental wounds, are becoming next generation of migrants. Are they going to leave their own children behind too? Will we see this history repeat forever?” a netizen named “picnic” wrote on Douban.com.

During the project Fan talked to factory owners to shoot his documentary inside Zhang's place of employment. He also followed Zhang and his wife back to Sichuan on an extremely crowded train.

After spending a long time with Zhang's family, Fan and his staff developed good rapport with them. As a third-party filmmaker, Fan's group had to keep themselves out of the family struggles.

But the barrier between filmmaker and subject can hardly stand up to true emotional challenges.

In one fight between Zhang and his daughter, the cameraman had to stop Fan from separating them, Fan said in an interview with *Southern Weekly*. But his involvement in the family finally drove him to stop the fight from escalating.



Zhang Qin at home in Huiling Village, Sichuan Province



The film follows a family of migrant workers for three years as they return home for the Spring Festival.



Chen Suqin (left) and Zhang Changhua at the Guangzhou Railway Station

Zhang Qin and her parents at work in a Guangzhou factory

Last Train Home

Where: Culture Yard, 19 Shique Hutong, Beixinqiao, Dongcheng District
When: July 15, 8 pm
Admission: 80 yuan, 50 yuan for students
Tel: 8404 4166